

DUNGEON FANTASY

POWERED BY GURPS

SERPENTS OF LEGEND

A NOKRÖLONDRI BESTIARY EXPANSION



BY MARKO S. VUJNOVIĆ





Playtesting and Proofreading

Alex Prewett, Anders Starmark, Andrew "Dalin" Roy,
Barry Dewey-Robertson, Beau Schinkle,
Ben Zittere, Brice Moss, Charles Saeger,
Christopher R. Rice, Cole M. B Jenkins, Danny MacFie,
James Byerly, James Larcom, Jeremy Re, kreios,
Kyle Norton, LokRobster, Marko Vujnovic,
Paul "WoefulHC" Henrichsen, Peter Daly,
Ron "Dingo" Fenton, Shieldbunny, Simonious

Many thanks to Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch
for invaluable insight.

This work wouldn't exist without Alex Prewett acting
as Agent Provocateur, asking questions about hydras
until we obviously needed to write a book about them.

Artwork

Billy Blue (billyblueart.com)
Brenden Lancaster (brendanlancasterart.com)
Douglas Deri (artstation.com/douglasderi)
Jonathan Vera (artstation.com/artedesastre)
Juan Ochoa (juanochoa.co)
Matsya Das (matsyadas.com)
Teresa Guido (artstation.com/teresaguido)
Piotr Jamroz (artstation.com/arachnea)

Other art courtesy of commercial licenses through Adobe Stock Art
Some artwork © 2015 Dean Spencer, used with permission. All
rights reserved.

DUNGEON FANTASY™

POWERED BY GURPS®

SERPENTS OF LEGEND

A NORÐLONDR BESTIARY EXPANSION

by Marko S. Vujnovic

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Required Reading.....	2
Monster Classes.....	2
Norðlond and The World	
Worm.....	3
Pronunciation Guide.....	3
Traits, Tactics, and Toxins	4
Traits	4
Tactics	5
Alternative Toxins	7
Rules	7
Breaking Free with Brute Force	7
Serpent Specials	8
Avoiding Gaze Attacks	8
On the Shoulders of Giants	9
Amphisbaena	10
Juvenile Amphisbaena	10
Amphisbaena.....	11
Amphisbaena, Feathered .	12
Couatl	14
Couatl Blessed	16
Minions	16
The Hand	17
Feathered Giant Viper	18
Flying Viper	19
Gorgon	20
Gorgon (Höggormur Martröð)	21
Gorgon, Greater.....	22
Fórnsnake.....	24
Gorgonoid.....	25
Snakebear.....	26
Hydra.....	27
Hydra.....	29
Hydra, Chthonic.....	30
Hydra, Skeletal.....	31
Jarðormur	32
Bigger is (Mostly) Better	32
Jarðormur	33
Myrkra Ormur	34
Creatures of Shadow	34
Battering Ramsnake	13
Myrkrainfused	35
Juvenile Shadow Serpents	35
Myrkra Ormur	36
Myrkra Python	37
Myrkra Viper.....	38
Snákamaðr.....	39
Snákamaðr Hunter	40
Snákamaðr Warrior	41
Martröðtýndr	42
Martröðtýndr Warriors	42
Nightmare Snake-Priests	42
Martröðtýndr Assassin	43
Martröðtýndr High Priest	44
Snákamaðr as Player Characters	46
Whompsnake	47
Cults and Corruption..	48
Serpent Cults.....	48
Cult Personalities	48
Battling Cults	50
Build Your Own Cult	51
The Cult of Thoom.....	52
Children of Earth	52
Houses of Restoration	53
The Outer Circle	53
The Inner Circle	53
Dulsa Thoom	54
Dulsa Thoom	56
Dulsa Thoom, Snake Mon- ster	57
The Silver Torc	
Trade Guild	58
History	58
Membership	58
The Cave	58
Trail of Bodies	58
Artifact Trade	58
Adventure Hooks	58
Nightmare Corruption ..	59
Nightmare Love Languages	59
Delving Into Corruption	59
Win Stupid Prizes	60
Keeping It Clean	60

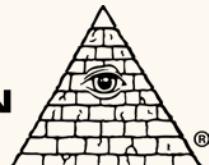


By permission of
Steve Jackson Games
(sjgames.com)

ISBN: 978-1-950368-73-0 (SOFTCOVER); 978-1-950368-71-6 (PDF)

SERPENTS OF LEGEND ©2022 by GAMING BALLISTIC, LLC

STEVE
JACKSON
GAMES



DUNGEON FANTASY RPG is copyright © 1980, 2018–2022 by Steve Jackson Games Incorporated. **DUNGEON FANTASY RPG**, the pyramid logo, and the names of all products published by Steve Jackson Games Incorporated are trademarks or registered trademarks of Steve Jackson Games Incorporated, and used under license. All rights reserved.

The scanning, uploading, and distribution of this material via the Internet or via any other means without the permission of the publisher is illegal, and punishable by law. Please purchase only authorized electronic editions, and do not participate in or encourage the electronic piracy of copyrighted materials. Your support of the authors' rights is appreciated.

INTRODUCTION

From the snake who tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden to *Jörmungandr* who encircles the world, serpents are present in the mythologies of most cultures. They appear as deities or their manifestations and agents, animals of both mystical and mundane significance, and monsters. Roleplaying games are mostly interested in that last group.

This book contains more than two dozen ready-to-use, snake-themed monsters and their variants. Rules tweaks help run these creatures in battle, and extra traits allow adding snakelike characteristics to existing monsters. There are even new player character options and serpent-worshiping cults. All of this neatly ties into the Norðlund cosmology ... but it doesn't depend on it: Just plug these monsters in to your own game!

REQUIRED READING

SERPENTS OF LEGEND makes frequent reference to the books contained in the reprint of the *DUNGEON FANTASY RPG BOXED SET*. While potentially of use to any roleplaying game, this book is intended to support the *DUNGEON FANTASY RPG, POWERED BY GURPS* and is more directly a supplemental expansion of the *NORÐLOND BESTIARY* (which is easier to say than its formal title, the *NORÐLONDR ÓVINABÓKIN*, or the long form title *NORÐLOND BESTIARY AND ENEMIES BOOK*).

❖ **Adventurers.** The creature write-ups reference traits defined in the core book on character abilities. Use them unless explicitly modified or superseded in the *MONSTERS* book or in the entries themselves.

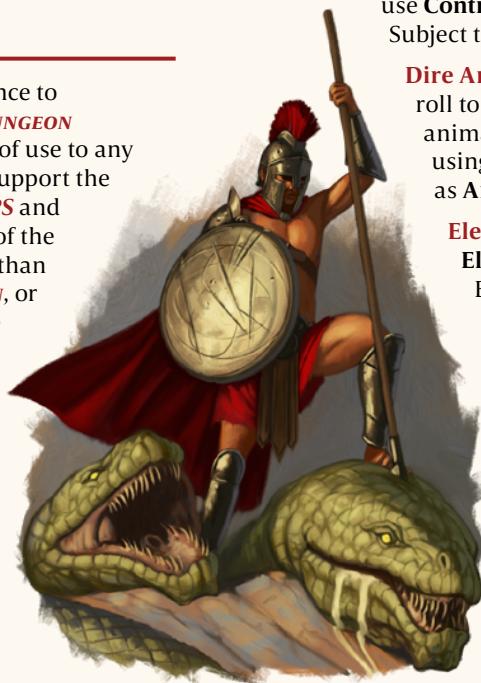
❖ **Exploits.** Rules for running monsters and traps are mostly found in *EXPLOITS*.

❖ **Monsters.** While the monster classes are repeated and amplified here in this bestiary, the core monster advantages and disadvantages are listed there and referenced extensively. Advantageous traits are on *MONSTERS, pp. 9–12*, disadvantageous ones on *pp. 12–14*.

❖ **Spells.** A few of the creatures can either cast spells or control those that do.

❖ **Fantastic Dungeon Grappling.** These monsters assume you're using the grappling rules from *FANTASTIC DUNGEON GRAPPLING; SERPENTS OF LEGEND* provides some of the required calculations up front. If desired, disregard those sections of the monster write-ups and revert to *EXPLOITS, pp. 40–41*.

❖ **Norðlondr Óvinabókin.** *SERPENTS OF LEGEND* makes use of monster traits found on *NORÐLONDR ÓVINABÓKIN pp. 6–8*. Some *Diseases and Toxins* used here reference the rules on *NORÐLOND BESTIARY, pp. 21–24*.



MONSTER CLASSES

Not all of the entities in the book are *normal* snakes, even if they look like them.

Animal. Affected by *Animal Empathy*, *Animal Handling*, *Disguise (Animal)*, *Mimicry*, *Animal College* spells except *Hybrid Control*, and *Repel Hybrids*: instead use *Control (Animal)* and *Repel (Animal)*. Subject to spells that affect the living.

Dire Animal. Requires a *Naturalist* roll to identify. Rolls to influence dire animals are at -5. Cannot be created using *Create Animal*. Otherwise treat as *Animal*.

Elemental. Affected by *Control Elemental* and similar spells. Elementals are also *Spirits* (see *Spirit Empathy, ADVENTURERS, p. 53*). Not subject to spells that affect the living. Elementals' natural home is the elemental Realm of *Niflheim*, bound within *Yggdrasil*. Most elementals are perfectly happy to remain in their home realm and distinctly irked by being called forth to *Midgard*.

Giant Animal. Large versions of normal animals; otherwise treat as *Dire Animal*. While there are no pure giant snakes in this book, any mundane creature

can use the rules for *Natural Variation (NORÐLOND BESTIARY, pp. 17–18)* to create some; the same goes for giant dire snakes, etc. Who doesn't love giant dire snakes?

Hybrid. Affected by special *Animal Handling* skills, *Hybrid Control*, and *Repel Hybrids*. Unaffected by *Control (Animal)* and *Repel (Animal)*. Otherwise treat as *Animal*.

Mundane. Subject to spells that affect the living. Some creatures can be profoundly magical and still be classed as *Mundane*: most dragons and PC wizards, for example.

Undead. Magical creatures and subject to *Turning*. Not subject to spells that affect the living.

NORÐLOND AND THE WORLD WORM

The Aesir and other powerful cosmic entities created the *Nine Realms* (**NORÐLOND BESTIARY, P. 5**) in an alliance of necessity against the attacks of an entity known as *Ymir*. One of these allies was *Jörmungandr*, who held off *Ymir* as the others performed the incantation to isolate them from the ravages of *Ginnungagap*, the infinite void that is home and battleground to Elder Things. *Ymir* fell when the ritual was complete, and *Yggdrasil*—the World Tree protecting the Nine Realms—sprung from *Ymir*'s corpse. Grievously injured, *Jörmungandr* entered a long slumber to recover. It cradled the newly created *Midgard* with its body, earning the name World Worm (*Miðgarðsormr* in Norðlondur).

The World Worm began as an Elder Thing, as were all members of the pact. But when those entities sealed themselves within the Nine Realms, they became native to the new microcosm. As the Aesir and others created life in their image to populate the Realms, so too did the World Worm, dreaming in its slumber. Its children, the snakes, spread through every nook and cranny of the Realms.

The World Worm's wounds do not mend on their own, and it requires magical flows from within the Nine Realms to promote its healing. When the *leyferð* (ley line junctions) of *Midgard* shattered, it closed the World Worm's primary source of these energies. It scrambled to tap new ones, and the only ones worth accessing were through *Yggdrasil* itself. Maybe because of the shock, maybe because *Yggdrasil* was created from *Ymir*'s corpse, the World Worm's slumber became restless. It cycles between dreams of healing and nightmares of doom where it witnesses its own demise.

Born from the World Worm's potent psyche, the **World Nightmare** took on a life of its own. It seeps into *Midgard* in places where the boundaries between Realms are thin. There it leaves swirling marks of power embedded in the environment, unsettling for mortals to behold. Exposure to Nightmare energies twists body and soul, turns

creatures into monsters, and drives men insane. **Nightmare corruption** drives those under its influence to unravel *Yggdrasil*, end the pain of the World Worm's wounds, and thereby bring about the end of the Realms. They point to the dreams as representing *Jörmungandr's* desires, rather than its fears.

The few experts on World Worm lore believe Nightmare to be the easiest way to pierce the barrier between the Nine Realms and *Ginnungagap*. *Easy* does not mean *wise*.

THE SSSIBILANT SSSPEECH

As noted in *Language, Please! (ADVENTURERS, P. 9)* most sapient beings are assumed to speak a common language. They are also assumed to speak their own language, though this is rarely stated formally.

The “snake-monsters” presented in this book are all related to the World Worm *Jörmungandr*, whose origin outside *Yggdrasil* properly classifies it as an **Elder Thing**.

The offshoots of the World Worm thus speak a variant of **Elder Tongue** called the **Sibilant Speech**. It costs 3 points for a delver to be familiar enough with the speech to decipher serpentine writings and lore. Combine that with **Hidden Lore (World Worm) [1 point]** to know the World Worm parts of **Hidden Lore (Elder Things)**, and a delver knows enough about *Jörmungandr* and its offspring to understand references in ancient writings, decipher cryptic prophetic scrawls, and otherwise help work out the usually unfathomable goals and methods of some of the snake-folk's more unusual spawn.

Snake-folk without points in **Hidden Lore (Elder Things)** may attempt a default at **IQ-5** in regards to World Worm lore *only*. Otherwise, a delver may use **Hidden Lore (Elder Things)** at -4 to recall information about the World Worm.

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Some monsters presented in this book include their Norðlondr names. Here's how to pronounce them.

MONSTER	PRONUNCIATION	SIMPLIFIED PRONUNCIATION
Himinshöggeomur (Couatl)	him-in's-hoeg-ormoor	him-in's-hogormoor
Höggormur martröð (Gorgon)	hoeg-ormoor mar-troedth	hogormoor martrod
Hrútur höggormur (battering ramsnake)	hroo-toor hoeg-ormoor	hroo-toor hogormoor
Jarðormur	yardth-ormoor	yardormoor
Myrkra ormur	meerkrah ormoor	meerkrah ormoor
Snákamaðr	snaaka-madthr	snaaka-mother
Martröðtýndr	mar-troedth-tween-durr	martrod-tinder

TRAITS, TACTICS, AND TOXINS

The fantasy genre—especially *pulp* fantasy—is full of people, animals, and monsters with serpentine body parts. Use the traits in this section to build such creatures.

They can represent natural creatures, wizards' experiments, beings corrupted by *Jörmungandr's* Nightmare, or anything else. You can create whole new monster types with their own ecologies, or one-off variants appearing alongside their corresponding “base” versions to keep delvers guessing.

Add one or more snake-flavored traits to an existing creature and poof! Instant serpent hybrid.

TRAITS

The monsters in this book share many common traits. Here are some new ones, as well as clarifications and important reminders for existing ones.

Breath Holding. Each level doubles the time the creature can hold its breath as per *EXPLOITS*, p. 21.

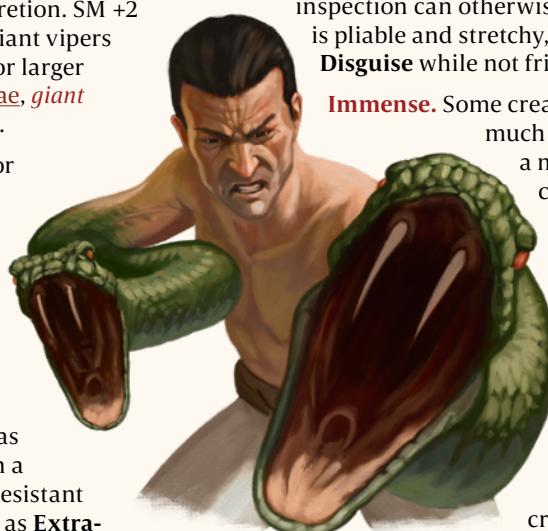
Brood Host. The creature has snakes living within it, usually as offspring. Every time it is injured by cutting, impaling or piercing damage, one of the snakes bursts forth and joins it as an ally in combat. A SM 0 creature can only bear a single small snake swarm (*MONSTERS*, p. 54) or several vipers (*NORDLOND BESTIARY*, p. 185). Larger creatures can carry more at the GM's discretion. SM +2 creatures may bear SM 0 snakes such as giant vipers (*MONSTERS*, p. 31), while SM +4 creatures or larger may carry SM +2 snakes like *amphisbaenae*, *giant constrictors* (*MONSTERS*, p. 31), and the like.

Constriction Attack. A creature of equal or greater Size Modifier than its victim can execute a **Strangle** by grappling the neck or torso.

Constrictor/Viper Arms. The subject has a snake replacing one or both of their arms. Unarmed strikes with constrictor arms do **thrust-1** cutting and control damage. Viper arms do impaling and substitute 2d toxic damage as a follow-up instead of control, halved with a successful HT roll. Each viper arm gives Resistant to Poison 3. The limbs otherwise function as **Extra-Flexible** (*MONSTERS*, p. 10) arms with **Ham-Fisted 2**.

Control DR. Damage Resistance that only stops Control Points when a creature is hit with a grappling attack.

Detect (Nightmare Corruption). Some creatures can sense the presence of *Nightmare corruption*. It is omni-directional and can be used in combat with a successful **Sense** roll (use **Perception**, just like any other sense).



Envenom Weapons. Requires **Venomous Bite**. The creature can exude its venom to coat weapons. This takes 1 minute per weapon or projectile. It has the same toxicity as the creature's **Venomous Bite**. The venom is good for one use, and goes inert after 24 hours. The subject can envenom drinks and meals—only a successful **Poisons** roll or magic can detect this. The creature gains three levels of **Resistant to Poison**.

Flight. Be sure to read *Air Superiority* (*MONSTERS*, p. 27), *Attacking from Above* (*EXPLOITS*, p. 38) and *Combat at Different Levels* (*EXPLOITS*, p. 47) in melee and *Elevation* (*EXPLOITS*, p. 43) for ranged attacks. All modifiers are summarized on *EXPLOITS*, pp. 95–97. In short, creatures that can fly over a target enjoy:

- +2 to attack and defense rolls in melee; they are also attacked at -2 to hit and foes defend at -2;
- The ability to swoop down, strike, and fly out of reach with a **Move and Attack** (*EXPLOITS*, pp. 30–31);
- +2 to hit and -2 to be hit, when using or targeted by ranged attacks;
- The ability to **Dodge and Drop** (*EXPLOITS*, p. 50) both up or down, or attempt an **Acrobatic Dodge** if able.

Hooded. The subject has extra skin and cartilage on their head which they can frill into a hood similar to a cobra. Doing so takes a **Ready** maneuver and automatically counts as an **Intimidation** attempt at +2. Only close physical inspection can otherwise detect this extra skin. It is pliable and stretchy, giving the subject +2 to **Disguise** while not frilled.

Immense. Some creatures are so large they are as much a (mobile) terrain feature as a monster. Delvers may wish to climb on top of them: see *On the Shoulders of Giants*!

Medusa Hair. The creature has a swarm of small vipers growing from its head. The snakes warn their host of impeding danger which counts as **360° Vision**. The vipers can perform one melee attack per turn in addition to any attacks the creature may otherwise have. This does **thrust-1** (2) **impaling** damage at Reach C. It also carries a follow-up dealing 2d **toxic** damage, halved on successful HT roll. Finally, the creature has **Resistant to Poison 3**.

Nictitating Membrane: Monster's eyes have DR equal to the trait level. Also gives +1 per level to all HT rolls concerning the eyes; e.g., for acid, blinding powder, flash nageteppo, and spells like *Sandstorm*, *Smoke*, and *Sunbolt*.

Ramming Speed. When this creature charges, get out of the way. When making a **Slam** attack or **Shield Rush** (*EXPLOITS, p. 40*), always look up their full **Move** score (as modified by encumbrance, injury, fatigue, or other factors) on the *Linear Measurement* column of the **SIZE AND SPEED/RANGE TABLE** instead of the distance they moved this turn.

Serpent's Maw. The creature has the wide mouth and jaw of many snakes. It gains the **Swallow Whole** ability, but can swallow creatures only two Size Modifiers smaller than itself instead of four.

Slithering Humanoid. Monster's listed ground Move assumes it wriggles along on its tail, like a snake, while keeping a humanoid body upright and off the ground. It has no legs and cannot kick in combat; it does have a tail (see the *Hit Location Table, EXPLOITS, p. 99*). Unless otherwise noted, the tail takes up the same hex as the rest of the body. A creature with a tail that extends to a trailing hex is referred to as a **vermitaur**. The creature needs special armor as per *Armor for Slithering Humanoids*. A slithering humanoid of SM +1 or larger, or a vermitaur of SM 0 or larger, takes up multiple hexes similar to a Horizontal creature.

Special Bonus Snake. The creature has a venomous snake growing out of its body, attached at the tail. It bites at Reach C, 1 for thrust impaling damage at +1 *per die*. The bite carries a follow-up doing **2d toxic damage**, halved on successful HT roll. The snake counts as a weapon but it can't parry. It can be targeted at -2, has the same DR as the rest of the creature, and damage over 1/2 of the creature's HP cripples it. The creature also has **Resistant to Poison 3**.

Swallow Whole. A creature with **Swallow Whole** can swallow prey four or more SM less than it once it has applied Control Points equal to or greater than the **Control Maximum**. This may be in one bite or represent grappling a creature with limbs until they're restrained enough to stuff into a gullet. Swallowed creatures begin to **suffocate** (*EXPLOITS, p. 70*); the creature doing the swallowing may worry for half its usual thrust damage as Control Points as a free action. To escape, you must grapple your way out against **Control DR** equal to the creature's ST/5. You may also cut your way out by delivering successful attacks totaling more than HP+DR injury! On the plus side, internal injuries count as vitals hits and creatures cannot defend with their esophagus or stomach! (Unless they can. Ewww.).

Tell-Tale Sign. The creature has an easy to detect sign of its presence. A roll against an appropriate skill as per *Recognition (MONSTERS, p. 4)* lets delvers know what kind of monster is stalking them. Noticing the sign automatically negates any mental stun if the creature achieves **surprise** (*EXPLOITS, pp. 26–27*). The sign can't be used to pinpoint the creature's location, so the creature can still attack a victim unnoticed at the start of battle. As an example, this trait turns a snake into a rattlesnake. Apply this trait to ambushing monsters to make an encounter against them easier.

Thick Scales. Heavy scales cover the creature. It provides flexible DR as per scale armor: Thick Scales 4 or lower has one point lower DR vs crushing attacks; Thick Scales 5 or higher gives equivalent protection as rigid armor.

Venomous Bite. The creature's bite contains a **2d toxic** attack (roll HT with half damage on a success) delivered as a follow-up attack. It does thrust-1 damage. If the creature has toxic *saliva*, damage is **crushing**. **Sharp teeth**, such as those found on a gila monster, are cutting. Most snakes have **fangs**, which do impaling damage. Use **DX** or **Brawling** to hit. Includes **Resistant to Poison 3** and *immunity* to the venom from their own species.

Venomous Death Throes. The creature explodes into a toxic cloud when defeated. Anyone in a 2-yard radius takes **2d toxic** damage. A successful HT roll halves the damage. If delvers can leave the area with a step, a successful dodge and retreat prevents damage. Due to surprise, delvers may not know to dodge the first time they witness a specific kind of adversary exploding. The creature has **Resistant to Poison 3**.

Venom Spitter. The creature can spit poison. This deals **2d toxic** damage, half on a successful HT roll, with Range 10 and Acc 2. DR does not protect. Use **DX** or **Brawling** to hit. The creature also has **Resistant to Poison 3**.

Vermiform. Monster has **No Manipulators** and **Slithers**, but is also **Double-Jointed** like a snake or worm. A **Vermiform** (Springing) creature can perform a *Springing Attack (Vermiform)* from *Turret Mode*.

World Walker. The creature may travel freely between the worlds of *Yggdrasil*. It can also visit the space between worlds from where it can spy on its quarry unnoticed.

TACTICS

The **Tactics** section in the monster descriptions gives hints on how each creature fights and—just as importantly—*doesn't fight*. Pay attention to how the tactics chosen interact with the monsters' strengths and weaknesses. Tactics are given a shorthand description and are described below for compact reference.

Ambusher. Always starts combat from a hidden position. If it is discovered or cannot strike from hiding, it withdraws or repositions. The method is described in parenthesis: **Ambusher (Attack from Above)** means it drops or strikes from trees, cliffs, and the like. **Ambusher (Concealment)** attacks from a camouflaged position. Delvers must win a Quick Contest of *Per*-based skill (usually **Naturalist**) versus the creature's **Camouflage** to spot it before it attacks; **Danger Sense** triggers early enough to provide a warning from just out of range. Most creatures adapted for their environment will have at least **Limited Camouflage**. Don't forget that huge creatures are easier to spot, giving a bonus equal to **Size Modifier** to the **Vision** roll in the Quick Contest.

Back-Row Commander. In battle, the creature lets its minions wade into melee while it hangs back coordinating their actions. It peppers the opposition with ranged attacks if it can, and only engages in melee as a last resort if there is no way for it to escape.

Bulldozer. Large creatures use their size instinctively. Why merely **Move** when you can **overrun** or **trample** your prey (*EXPLOITS, P. 40*). If the creature has an opportunity to attack more than one target by sweeping its body through a crowded field, it does so. Against one foe, it may move far enough to trample or overrun, then turn back and use another attack as well.

Cunning. Recognizes dangerous opponents, their strengths and weaknesses, and acts accordingly. They target those with lower armor or spellcasters first, leverage terrain or cover, and retreat if overmatched or injured. Such monsters seldom fight to the death, such as when defending nests.

Death From Above. A favorite tactic of grappling fliers is to swoop down and lift its prey into the air. There it constricts or worries its prey; if venomous, it uses the air time to give its toxin time to take effect. Monsters that are **Cunning** as well use this sequentially to defeat groups of foes; those with sub-sapient IQ fly away to have a meal in peace. Skilled fliers should rarely, if ever, engage in a “stand-up” fight in melee on the ground. This makes such creatures somewhat irksome to both GM and delvers, but the challenge is worth it.

Death From Shadows. Creatures using this tactic may use the rules for *Backstabbing* (*EXPLOITS, P. 57*). They get behind the nearest foe (or *any* foe on a critical success) within one Step of the target (with *Turret Mode*, that needn’t be very close). This perfectly set up attack is at +4 and the foe usually gets no defense. Pay close attention to the modifiers on *EXPLOITS, P. 57*, as well as delver attributes such as enhanced senses or **Danger Sense**!

Defensive Fighter. Highly mobile monsters—especially fliers—use their mobility to stay outside of foes’ melee reach (see *Air Superiority, MONSTERS, P. 27*). Exotic abilities such as teleportation, phasing between Realms and other powers should be used early and often.

Distraction Tactics. When encountered in groups, some break off to attack from behind, where they can grapple and strike from the side or rear.

Dead or Alive, You’re Coming with Me. Once a creature has secured prey in a grapple, it uses *Grab and Go* (*FANTASTIC DUNGEON GRAPPLING, P. 5*) to take itself out of combat, bringing its victim along, by using a **Move and Attack**. Very strong creatures can bring *several* victims along for the ride! Monsters that are also water-adapted move with the victim under water, holding them there to suffocate and drown.

Never Just One. The monster attacks in groups and is uncomfortable without backup. The creatures double- or triple-team adversaries when possible, targeting the head (eyes and neck) and vulnerable regions.



Nowhere to Hide. The creature can detect targets behind cover or concealment with special senses (**Detect, Subsonic Hearing**, and **Vibration Sense** are the usual suspects). They are effectively immune to **blindness**, though must still make **Sense** rolls.

One for The Team. Every time a creature with this ability is hit with an attack, one of its minions in the vicinity (within the minion’s Move of the creature) takes the blow instead, suffering all its effects. This can be used as a special ability for monsters skilled at coordinating their minions, or as a more general “boss-monster” rule switch.

Primary Target. The monster attacks a particular type of foe first. Unless it is also **reckless**, it cycles through targets as it incapacitates them—unconscious is as good as dead from a threat perspective (dead comes later, though!).

Puny Delver. Once it grapples a victim up to its **Control Maximum** or higher, the monster can use it as a weapon, swinging the captured creature for **thrust-2 crushing** damage, plus movement-based damage as per a *Slam* (*EXPLOITS, P. 40*) as if the poor delver had run at half the monster’s **Move**. Both the swung delver and the target take damage, exactly as a slam; it’s a two-fer!

Reckless. Once it attacks, the monster fights until slain. It faces all of its opponents at once and doesn’t use hit and run tactics. It makes liberal use of **All-Out Attack** and holds no special abilities in reserve.

Self-Preservation. The monster starts behaving more defensively if injured for more than **HP/10** in a single blow. If it cannot quickly neutralize the threat that hit them so hard, it withdraws. If it takes such blows from *several* foes, it

nopes right on out. If injured to below half its HP, it retreats if it can outrun its attackers. It only fights to the death if it can't escape or has a *very* good reason to stand its ground.

Spellcaster. The creature is a studied or otherwise non-instinctive wielder of arcane might. Study its spell list before starting combat, because the creature surely has done so. If they *could* have cast buffing spells before combat began, assume they *did* cast such spell. Don't forget these count as "on" for the purpose of *Maintaining Spells* (**SPELLS, PP. 11-12**).

Turret Defense. The creature assumes *turret mode* after grappling a victim, allowing it to protect its future meal with its bite while still keeping the target in its coils for hug therapy.

ALTERNATIVE TOXINS

Many of the venom-infused options in Traits include a mild venom doing **2d toxic damage**, halved with a **HT** roll. For more diversity (or lethality), replace it with one of the following alternatives of roughly the same potency.

For even *more* potent toxins increase the damage of these venoms, have them last longer (more damage cycles), apply a penalty to HT rolls, or some of each!

Alternatively, choose one of the venoms from the toxins in the **NORDLOND BESTIARY, P. 22** not repeated here.

Chronic Toxin. The victim must make a **HT** roll each cycle, for up to a given number of cycles. Failure deals **1d toxic damage**. Any success ends the effect.

Fatiguing Toxin. Deals **1d+2 fatigue damage**, halved on successful **HT** roll. Multiple cycles make this one nasty.

Fear Toxin. A particular form of **psychotic toxin** (**NORDLOND BESTIARY, P. 22**). In addition to any toxic damage, the victim instantly experiences visions related to their greatest fears. The subject makes one Fright Check, plus a self-control roll for every *phobia* (**ADVENTURERS, P. 64**) the character possesses, treating each failure as a new failed fright check as per the disadvantage description.

Immobilizing Toxin. Reduces **Move** and **Dodge** scores by **1d** on a failure, half that (round down) on a success. A critical failure results in **paralysis**. Frequency of recovery rolls is listed in the toxin description.

Immobilizing Toxin (Variant). Inflicts **Control Points** on the victim without a grapple, as muscle responses are uncoordinated and slow. For every **-2** to **DX**, determine **Move** as if your encumbrance was one level higher. A **HT** roll (frequently penalized) halves Control Points taken. A critical failure, or if encumbrance increases beyond **Extra Heavy**, causes **paralysis**. Recovery rolls are listed in the toxin description.

Pain Toxin (Severe). The victim must make a **HT** roll. On failure, they suffer **severe pain**, or **moderate pain** on success. This ends after success on a separate, hourly **HT** roll. A milder version than found in **NORDLOND BESTIARY**.

Slowing Toxin. The victim must make a **HT** roll. Their **Basic Move** and **Speed** are reduced by **1** for every two points of failure, minimum **1**. This only ends after success on a separate, hourly **HT** roll.

RULES

Monsters with interesting abilities and uncommon morphologies can raise rules questions during play. This chapter offers answers to some common questions as well as new options to support the monsters in this book.

As befitting a book called **SERPENTS OF LEGEND**, many of the serpents presented here are, well, legendary. They're apex creatures who make great boss monsters for experienced, well-equipped parties, though they'll simply *flatten* the less adept. Their minions, spawn, cultists, and influence reach well beyond themselves, and amateur delvers should notch their blades on a few of those before they go after the big dogs (big wyrms?).

Read the monster entries carefully! *Reading Monster Stats* (**MONSTERS, P. 15**) covers the basics of how to read the entries. As befitting serpents of legend, they have many **Special Abilities** and **Traits**: Be sure not to miss anything in those sections of the stat block. Pay attention to **Spells** for monsters that have them. The Tactics section gives some shorthand enumerating a monster's greatest strengths and weaknesses, helping the GM decide how to run it in combat.

BREAKING FREE WITH BRUTE FORCE

This is an optional rule that helps strong but less-deft creatures bring brute force to bear against foes seeing to grapple. If you are stronger than your foe when attacking to break free ("counter-grappling"), you may add the difference in **ST** as a bonus to your skill. For example, if Björn (a **ST 18** wrestler) grapples a **ST 30** hydra, the hydra gets a +12 bonus to all attack rolls to break free. Björn gets no such bonus.

The bonus offsets **DX** penalties inflicted by the grapple and maximizes the chance of applying a creature's (considerable) strength to break out of a grapple. It enables **Deceptive Attack**, minimizing the chance of the grappler negating your break free attempt. If you have enough skill left over after you've all but assured at least one successful "hit," perform a **Rapid Strike** to shed even more Control. Strength matters!

SERPENT SPECIALS

Slithering Humanoid and Vermiform creatures may need to consider the following guidelines.

ARMOR FOR SLITHERING HUMANOIDS

Creatures with humanoid torsos but the tail of a serpent instead of legs need special armor to cover it. This weighs the same as body armor (*ADVENTURERS, p. 108*), and must be a curtain of flexible armor like mail, scale or segmented plate. Properly aiming an attack underneath this works as striking torso chinks at half the usual penalty (-4).

ARMOR MODIFIER: SERPENTCRAFTED

Snákamaðr tailsmiths make the best articulated snaky tail armor: scale or segmented plate perfectly matched to the wearer. This eliminates the susceptibility to attacks targeting beneath it. Mail doesn't need much more than wire snips. Any scale or segmented plate: +3 CF.

SNAKES ON A PLANE

Monstrous snakes are long and take up multiple hexes on a battlemap. As per *MONSTERS, p. 8*, multi-hex creatures direct their movement with their heads and their bodies follow: Their bodies sweep an area when they change facing. Snakes tend not to move like this—their body generally curls in the direction where their head leads.

The GM is welcome to have a serpent's body “wiggle” to the sides as long as it forms reasonable coils—especially if an overrun opportunity presents itself. Individual monster descriptions will mention exceptions to this kind of movement.

Most snakes are only one hex wide on a battlemap, but giant ones may be wider. The width of a snake relative to its length varies by species. Constrictors are generally more muscled and have greater girth than other kinds. Starting at SM +5, a snake may be two hexes wide; every additional +2 to SM increases this by one hex. Individual monster descriptions note a serpent's width.

SPRINGING ATTACK (VERMIFORM)

Some vermiciform creatures may explosively uncoil from *Turret Mode* by jumping and expending 1 FP. This is an enhanced *Springing Attack* (*ADVENTURERS, p. 37*), giving +2 to ST for the next turn. It requires **Move and Attack** or **All-Out Attack**, but the creature adds its move to its Reach, depending on the chosen maneuver. It can **slam** or **overrun** any targets in its path as per *EXPLOITS, p. 40*; victims are automatically **trampled** as per *EXPLOITS, p. 50* if they occupy hexes in which the creature ends its movement. Strikes performed this way are not penalized by -4 or limited to level 9 in case of a **Move and Attack**.

TURRET MODE

A snake of SM 0 or larger may coil up, and then strike using more of its body than when it's extended. Coiling into the “turret” takes a **Ready** maneuver. Once set, the snake may add its usual **Step** to its **Reach** for a given attack, without having to actually step to do it. A turret mode snake attacks and defends at -2 while coiled.

Coiling increases the snake's situational awareness, granting **Peripheral Vision** (*ADVENTURERS, p. 52*).

A Turret Mode serpent may creep around by using the movement allowed in a **Wait** maneuver (*EXPLOITS, pp. 32–33*). It may use **Move** if desired, or retreat if attacked, but exits Turret Mode doing so.

It may not **Move and Attack** from Turret Mode without *Springing Attack* (Vermiform), nor may it **Dodge and Drop** or perform an **Acrobatic Dodge**.

In short, Turret Mode trades accuracy and defensive capability for increased situational awareness and a greater reach for its attacks.

VERMIFORM POSTURE

Snakes, worms, and other vermiciform creatures normally rear up while fighting. This lets them attack any hit location on their opponents as would any other creature of their SM and reach. It also counts as “standing” for the purpose of *Evading* (*EXPLOITS, pp. 34–35*). They may get knocked down, or deliberately **Dodge and Drop** to claim +3 to **Dodge** against ranged attacks. This results in a posture identical to lying down, but it takes them only one **Change Posture** maneuver to rear back up again.

AVOIDING GAZE ATTACKS

Gaze attacks mostly divide into two categories: Those that work as attacks and those that affect hapless delvers as soon as they look at the monster.

Gazes that act as attacks are covered by the combat rules in *EXPLOITS*.

The only way to avoid the second type is to avert your eyes: hide behind a shield or cloak, look at the floor, etc. You defend at -2 against any attacks and your own attacks are considered *Wild Swings* (*EXPLOITS, p. 38*). You may also close your eyes, but that makes you **blind**.

If you're caught by surprise, you may block to hide behind a shield or cloak, or dodge to otherwise avert your eyes. Apply any relevant active defense modifiers, but you may not **retreat** or perform an **Acrobatic Dodge**. Success means you do it in time and are unaffected by the gaze attack. All of this assumes your delver knows there is a gaze to defend against in the first place—without **Danger Sense**, you get no defense against an attack if you were unaware of it!

ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

One may climb on any creature of larger SM than the climber, whose ST is also more than 2x the climber's in order to stab hard-to-reach places or for less-violent purposes, such as hitching a ride back to a foe's lair.

Not Grappling. Climbing is *not* grappling. A creature being climbed bears **10x the climber's Basic Lift** as encumbrance (*ADVENTURERS, PP. 11-12*) and suffers only those penalties; you may use the actual weight of the climber and gear if you know it. Otherwise, roll, shout, and move on. Follow-up grappling techniques require attacking using a grappling skill.

On Belay! Use **Climbing** to obtain a suitable grip on the target creature; determine Control Points for **Climbing** as if it were *Wrestling* (*ADVENTURERS, P. 92* and *Grappling Damage, FANTASTIC DUNGEON GRAPPLING, P. 3*). A grip requires Control Points exceeding the climber's ST/10; the GM determines on what hit location the delver has secured the initial grab. If the climber loses their grip while climbing, they fall. Resolve falls as per *Balancing* (*EXPLOITS, P. 20*), including the DX roll for a last-minute catch.

Climb. Climbing means traversing the monster, which counts as *Treacherous Ground (EXPLOITS, P. 35)*, giving -2 to DX rolls and -1 to active defenses, with one additional movement point required per hex. Climb by releasing your grip and choosing between **Attack, Move and Attack**, or **All-Out Attack** maneuvers to determine allowed movement. At the end of your move, attack as per *On Belay!* to re-establish your hold. All applicable modifiers for maneuver choice are applied to the *Climbing*-based attack roll! Alternately, to move one yard at a time, you may select the **Move** maneuver, using a ST-based **Climbing** roll to execute a *Pull-Up (EXPLOITS, P. 21)*.

Are We There Yet? The GM must determine how far a delver must traverse to reach a desired target. It shouldn't be farther away in yards than the Linear Measurement for the creature's **Size Modifier (EXPLOITS, PP. 97-98)**.

Roll Over. A creature being climbed on may roll over and crush all climbers; this counts as an attack. Climbers must leap off as per *Taking Cover (EXPLOITS, P. 50)* or suffer full **trampling** damage (*EXPLOITS, P. 40*).

Get Off o' Me! A strong creature may attempt to shed all climbers less than half its ST (stronger foes must be shed individually). This counts as an attack. Roll the creature's **thrust** damage and halve it; apply that to all climbers' grips, possibly resulting in a fall.



AMPHISBAENA

Amphisbaenae purportedly originate in Morevel. A great hero slew a particularly vile old gorgon. Mounting a winged horse, he flew over the land, carrying the head. Blood dripped from the gorgon's neck and amphisbaenae sprung up where it fell to the ground. Today, they have spread through warmer climates all over the world and inhabit deserts, rocky hills, forests, jungles, swamps and coastal areas. At least, that's the story. (Pro tip: It's true!)

Amphisbaenae are venomous constrictors and ambush predators. They eat anything that comes their way and fits in their gullet, but seem to have a particular penchant for ants. They gorge themselves on normal anthills, earth and all, and consider giant ants a delicacy. Offering them giant ants, alive or dead, is a sure way to placate these serpents. Not so much the giant ants.

Amphisbaenae are normally solitary creatures. Only during mating season, which can be in any time of the year, do they gather in clutches from two to a dozen. They guard the eggs until they hatch in about two months, and stay with their young for several weeks until they disperse.

Even though they're quite dangerous animals, hunting parties seek them out because they are claimed to be useful in folk medicine. Wearing its skin around the neck warms the person, cures arthritis and the common cold, and ensures safe pregnancies. Its carcass repels cold as well as a campfire in snow. Eating its meat attracts lovers, making you more attractive to those looking to get romantically involved with members of the subject's sex. (Pro tip: Eh, maybe not so true. At least not all of them.)

There are several variations of amphisbaenae, each adapted to a specific environment. The specimen presented below dwells in forests and jungles. Other variations have departures from this baseline noted in their description.

VARIANTS

Desert Amphisbaena. Replace Terrain Adaptation (Undergrowth) with (Sand); add Tunneling (Sand, Move 3, Restored), remove Catfall and Climbing. This variant hides itself under the sand and often emerges only with its heads to bite its victims. Only its **face, skull and neck** hit locations can be targeted in this case.

Rock Amphisbaena. Replace Terrain Adaptation (Undergrowth) with (Rocky). Hills and mountains are not ideal environments for amphisbaenae due to the lack of heavy vegetation. This variant prefers to drop on its victims from huge boulders or overhead cliffs. It can also lie waiting in pits and crawlspaces beneath the rocks if it must.

Swamp Amphisbaena. Replace Terrain Adaptation (Undergrowth) with (Swamp). In shallow water this variant sometimes plays the same game as the desert one, exposing only its heads above the waterline.

JUVENILE AMPHISBAENA

This is a young specimen who hasn't yet reached the girth and learned all the tricks of a fully grown amphisbaena. It is fully as long as its older relatives (SM +2), but not as strong or thick.

Attributes: ST/HP 17, DX 12, IQ 4, HT/FP 12. SM +2. Will 11, Per 11, Damage 1d+2/2d-1. DR 2.

Speed 6.00, Move 6, Dodge-10.

Skills: Brawling-14, Climbing-16, Stealth-14, Wrestling-14, Swimming-12

TACTICS

The juvenile amphisbaena has the same playbook as the adult one, except that it doesn't slam, overrun or trample opponents. It is quite thin for its length and can pass through opponents' hexes freely.

TRAITS

- ⌚ 360° Vision
- ⌚ Amphibious
- ⌚ Catfall
- ⌚ Chameleon 1
- ⌚ Cold-Blooded
- ⌚ Combat Reflexes
- ⌚ Constriction Attack
- ⌚ Extra Attack 1
- ⌚ Extra Head
- ⌚ Infravision
- ⌚ Nictitating Membrane 2
- ⌚ Resistant to Poison 3
- ⌚ Subsonic Hearing
- ⌚ Temperature Tolerance 4 (Heat)
- ⌚ Terrain Adaptation (Undergrowth)
- ⌚ Vermiform
- ⌚ Vibration Sense (Water)
- ⌚ Wild Animal

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Venomous Bite. Juvenile amphisbaenae inject a variant immobilizing toxin, causing **1d+2 toxic and control damage**. A **HT-2** roll is required to resist the toxin. Roll **HT+1** each subsequent day following the bite to see if control or paralysis effects subside.

ATTACKS

⌚ **Bite (14):** 1d+2 impaling plus Venomous Bite follow-up. Reach C, 1. Treat as weapon, not as body part.

⌚ **Grapple (14):** 2d+1 control. Reach C, 1. Wrestling ST 19.

AMPHISBAENA

Animal, Dire (Vermiform)

The amphisbaena is a giant, two-headed snake. The second head is where the tip of the tail would be on a normal snake, and the two sides of the creature are indistinguishable from one another.

TACTICS

- ⌚ Ambusher (Attack from Above)
- ⌚ Bulldozer
- ⌚ Cunning
- ⌚ Nowhere to Hide

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Danger Noodle. The amphisbaena moves by pushing both its heads forward and forming a "U" shape with its body in the direction of movement. It encircles its target, cutting off retreat and maximizing overrun opportunities. It can lead its movement with either end, and as long as that hex moves for only a step, it can perform any maneuver that allows no more movement than a step.

Solo Tag Team. The amphisbaena attacks from a different side hex with each head, encircling the victim within its "U" shape. As long as one end moves for only a step, it can perform an Attack maneuver and strike with the other end from a different angle. While constricting, the free head strikes at the victim from behind. Both heads sometimes bite instead if it's satisfied with its hold.

Venomous Bite. Amphisbaena venom is a [variant immobilizing toxin](#), causing **2d toxic and control damage**. A **HT-4** roll is required to resist the toxin. Roll **HT-1** each subsequent day following the bite to see if control or paralysis effects subside.

TRAITS

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ⌚ 360° Vision | ⌚ Resistant to Poison 3 |
| ⌚ Amphibious | ⌚ Subsonic Hearing |
| ⌚ Catfall | ⌚ Temperature Tolerance 4
(Heat) |
| ⌚ Chameleon 1 | ⌚ Terrain Adaptation
(Undergrowth) |
| ⌚ Cold-Blooded | ⌚ Vermiform |
| ⌚ Combat Reflexes | ⌚ Vibration Sense
(Water) |
| ⌚ Constriction Attack | ⌚ Wild Animal |
| ⌚ Extra Attack 1 | |
| ⌚ Extra Head | |
| ⌚ Infravision | |
| ⌚ Nictitating Membrane 2 | |

SKILLS

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| ⌚ Brawling-16 | ⌚ Wrestling-16 |
| ⌚ Climbing-18 | ⌚ Swimming-14 |
| ⌚ Stealth-16 | |

ST 25 DX 14 IQ 4 HT 12

HP 25 WILL 11 PER 11 FP 12

Control Thresholds

$\geq 0.1 \times CM$	$\geq 1/2 \times CM$	$\geq CM$	$\geq 1.5 \times CM$	$\geq 2 \times CM$	DMG	2d+2/5d-1
3	14	27	41	54	BASIC LIFT	125

Defenses				SPEED	6.50
Parry	Dodge	Block	DR		
—	10	—	3	MOVE	6

ATTACKS

- ⌚ **Bite (16):** 2d+3 impaling plus **Venomous Bite** follow-up. Reach C, 1. Treat as weapon, not as body part.
- ⌚ **Grapple (16):** 3d+2 control. Reach C, 1.
- ⌚ **Slam or Overrun (16):** 2d+2 crushing or 2d+8 crushing (Move 6)
- ⌚ **Trample (16):** 2d+4 crushing. Automatically hits for half damage on overrun that knocks down the target.



AMPHISBAENA, FEATHERED

Animal, Dire (Winged Serpent)

A rare occurrence, this amphisbaena has a pair of wings located centrally on its body. It has feathers, similar to the couatl with which it is often associated.

TACTICS

- ❖ Ambusher (Attack from Above)
- ❖ Bulldozer
- ❖ Cunning
- ❖ Dead or Alive, You're Coming With Me
- ❖ Death from Above
- ❖ Defensive Fighter
- ❖ Nowhere to Hide

TRAITS

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ❖ 360° Vision | ❖ Infravision |
| ❖ Chameleon 1 | ❖ Nictitating Membrane 2 |
| ❖ Cold-Blooded | ❖ Resistant to Poison 3 |
| ❖ Combat Reflexes | ❖ Subsonic Hearing |
| ❖ Constriction Attack | ❖ Swoop (Move 24) |
| ❖ Enhanced Move (Air) | ❖ Temperature Tolerance 4
(Heat) |
| ❖ Extra Attack 1 | ❖ Vermiform |
| ❖ Extra Head | ❖ Wild Animal |
| ❖ Flight (Winged, Move 12/24) | |

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fly Away! The amphisbaena retains its full flying move while grappling if its victim has ST 13 or less. Otherwise, its move is halved. It will not attempt to abscond with victims stronger than ST 27 as it cannot flee effectively (it lets go if reduced to a mere step of movement).

Venomous Bite. Amphisbaena venom is a variant immobilizing toxin, causing **2d toxic and control damage**. A **HT-4** roll is required to resist the toxin. Roll HT-1 each subsequent day following the bite to see if control or paralysis effects subside.

Danger Noodle. If forced to fight from the ground, the feathered amphisbaena moves by pushing both its heads forward and forming a "U" shape with its body in the direction of movement. It encircles its target, cutting off retreat and maximizing overrun opportunities. It can lead its movement with either end, and as long as that hex moves for only a step, it can perform any maneuver that allows no more movement than a step.

Solo Tag Team. The amphisbaena attacks from a different side hex with each head, cradling the victim within its "U" shape. As long as one end moves for only a step, it can perform an Attack maneuver and strike with the other end from a different angle. While constricting, the free head strikes at the victim from behind. Both heads sometimes bite instead if it's satisfied with its hold.

ST 25 DX 14 IQ 4 HT 12

HP 25 Will 11 Per 11 FP 12

Control Thresholds SM +2

≥0.1×CM	≥1/2×CM	≥CM	≥1.5×CM	≥2×CM	D _{MG} 2d+2/5d-1
3	14	27	41	54	BASIC LIFT 125

Defenses				SPEED 6.50
Parry	Dodge	Block	DR	MOVE 6
—	10	—	3	

ATTACKS

- ❖ **Bite (16):** 2d+3 impaling plus Venomous Bite follow-up. Reach C, 1. Treat as weapon, not as body part.
- ❖ **Grapple (16):** 3d+2 control. Reach C, 1.
- ❖ **Swoop (16):** 2d+14 crushing and control (Move 12), 2d+18 crushing and control (Move 24). Reach C, 1.

SKILLS

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| ❖ Acrobatics-15 | ❖ Stealth-16 |
| ❖ Brawling-16 | ❖ Sumo Wrestling-16 |



BATTERING RAMSNAKE

Animal, Dire (Vermiform)

On first glance this serpent resembles a *giant viper* ([MONSTERS, P. 31](#)), but a pair of ram's horns clearly marks it as a distinct creature. It prefers temperate forests but can be found in any climate except cold ones. In Norðlund, it is known as the *hrútur höggormur*.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Battering Ram. If it has no opponents within reach while in [turret mode](#), or if there are multiple opponents in a line within 11 yards, the ramsnake exits [turret mode](#) with a [Springing Attack \(Vermiform\)](#). It slams into the last delver in line with its horns and **overruns** the rest. It preferentially targets physically unimposing foes who hide behind others. It re-assumes turret mode on the next turn.

Nimble Striker. The ramsnake is exceedingly swift and has a step of two hexes. It never grapples; use its grapple attack only for breaking free.

Sneaky Snek. When ambushing prey, it has Stealth-18 vs Hearing if it's moving, and Stealth-21 if motionless.

Springing Specialist. The battering ramsnake may retreat after a [Springing Attack \(Vermiform\)](#) as a [Move and Attack](#).

Venom. Take **2d toxic** damage and suffer a -1 per die penalty to muscle-powered damage. Then make a **HT-4** roll. Failure induces **nausea** and increases the damage penalty to -2 per die . Make a **HT-1** roll every hour after the bite; success ends both nausea and the damage penalty.

TACTICS

- ⦿ Ambusher (Undergrowth)
- ⦿ Cunning

TRAITS

- ⦿ Cold-Blooded
- ⦿ Combat Reflexes
- ⦿ Enhanced Dodge 2
- ⦿ Infravision
- ⦿ Nictitating Membrane 1
- ⦿ Ramming Speed
- ⦿ Silence 3
- ⦿ Subsonic Hearing
- ⦿ Terrain Adaptation (Undergrowth)
- ⦿ Turret Mode
- ⦿ Vermiform (Springing)
- ⦿ Wild Animal

SKILLS

- ⦿ Brawling-17
- ⦿ Stealth-15
- ⦿ Sumo Wrestling-17

ST 17

DX 15

K 3

HT 12

HP 17

WILL 12

PER 12

FP 12

Control Thresholds

$\geq 0.1 \times \text{CM}$	$\geq 1/2 \times \text{CM}$	$\geq \text{CM}$	$\geq 1.5 \times \text{CM}$	$\geq 2 \times \text{CM}$	DMG	1d+2/2d-1
2	10	19	29	38	BASIC LIFT	58

Parry	Dodge	Block	DR	SPEED	MOVE	11
—	13	—	3			

ATTACKS

- ⦿ **Bite (17):** 1d+2 (2) impaling plus **Venom** follow-up. Reach C, 1. Treat as weapon, not as body part
- ⦿ **Grapple (17):** 2d+1 control. Reach C, 1.
- ⦿ **Slam or Overrun (17):** 1d+7 crushing. DR 10 vs its own slam attacks.
- ⦿ **Trample (17):** 1d+3 crushing. Automatically hits for half damage on overrun that knocks down the target if target is in hex where the snake ends its movement. Only usable on prone targets.



COUATL (HIMINSHÖGGORMUR)

Mundane (Winged Serpent)

The *couatl* is a giant winged serpent covered in bright multicolored feathers. Also known as the *himinshöggorumur* in Norðlond, the lore surrounding it is ambiguous. Some say it's a benevolent protector of mortals, while others tell of it raining destruction from the sky. It's complicated.

Couatls are the World Worm's immune response to its Nightmare while it heals. They rise from the earth when needed to neutralize corruption in a region. They frequently just destroy all sources of corruption within an area, but sometimes they seal it and perform long-term cleansing rituals while lairing around it.

To mortals, a *couatl* has an utterly alien mind. It is not motivated by feelings, morality, or needs. It is as likely to destroy a corrupted place without regard to collateral damage as it is to cryptically warn mortals living in the area to do it themselves lest they feel its wrath. Sometimes it tasks a group of delvers to do it in exchange for magic or knowledge. A *couatl* may suffer, or even treat with, mortals in its lair—mostly out of boredom. It isn't really interested in the individuals who inhabit the world: It's focused on the *world itself*. It converses in a disinterested manner, showing no sympathy for its interlocutor. Negotiations are exclusively about cold, hard facts, using **Influence Skills** against it at -3, and **Empathy** does not work.

A *couatl* can sense corruption in the land and the living, and immediately annihilates any creatures over which corruption has gained even the smallest influence. It senses if someone is suffering from nightmares. It warns such individuals to leave its presence immediately or be destroyed. *Couatls* are not "good" by any reasonable definition, but they register as such for spells affecting good creatures. "What's good for the world is good for everyone." Or someone, somewhere, probably.

TACTICS

- ⦿ Cunning
- ⦿ Defensive Fighter
- ⦿ Nowhere to Hide
- ⦿ One for the Team
- ⦿ Primary Target (Nightmare Corrupted)
- ⦿ Spellcaster

ST 50

DX 15

IQ 15

HT 15

HP 50

WILL 15

PER 15

FP 15

Control Thresholds

≥0.1×CM	≥1/2×CM	≥CM	≥1.5×CM	≥2×CM
---------	---------	-----	---------	-------

5

26

52

78

104

DMG 5d+2/8d+1

BASIC LIFT 500

Defenses

Parry

Dodge

Block

SPEED 7.50

—

12

—

6

MOVE

8

ATTACKS

- ⦿ Bite (19): 5d+6 impaling plus Venomous Bite follow-up. Reach C-3. Treat as weapon, not as body part.
- ⦿ Grapple (19): 5d+12 control. Reach C-3.
- ⦿ Overrun (19): 5d+27 crushing (Move 8), 5d+37 crushing (Move 16), 5d+42 crushing (Move 24). Reach C-3.

TRAITS

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ⦿ Acute Detect 10 | ⦿ Immunity to Mind Control |
| ⦿ Amphibious | ⦿ Immunity to Petrification |
| ⦿ Callous | ⦿ Immunity to Poison |
| ⦿ Combat Reflexes | ⦿ Indomitable |
| ⦿ Compartmentalized Mind | ⦿ Nictitating Membrane 2 |
| ⦿ Constriction Attack | ⦿ No Sense of Humor |
| ⦿ Dark Vision | ⦿ See Invisible |
| ⦿ Detect (Nightmare) | ⦿ Unfazeable |
| ⦿ Doesn't Breathe | ⦿ Vermiform |
| ⦿ Doesn't Sleep | ⦿ Vibration Sense (Air and Water) |
| ⦿ Elemental Resistance 10 | ⦿ World Walker |
| ⦿ Energy Reserve 50 | |
| ⦿ Flight (Winged, Move 16/24) | |

SKILLS

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| ⦿ Acrobatics-17 | ⦿ Stealth-15 |
| ⦿ Brawling-19 | ⦿ Swimming-16 |
| ⦿ Hidden Lore (World Worm)-20 | ⦿ Thaumatology-15 |
| ⦿ Innate Attack (Projectile)-19 | ⦿ Wrestling-19 |

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Eradicate Nightmare. Ignores the *Rule of 16 (EXPLOITS, P. 8)* against those suffering from nightmares or under the influence of Nightmare corruption. **Earthquake** and **Windstorm** have no energy cost if there is a corrupted site within the target area.

Spellcasting. The *couatl* has six levels of spellcasting talent for the purposes of *Talent and Effect (SPELLS, P. 11)*. It draws its magic from the essence of the world itself which makes it unaffected by mana, sanctity, etc.

Telepathy. May establish two-way mental communication with anyone in line of sight within 100 yards. This doesn't force the subject to respond, but the *couatl* can probe their mind as if using the **Mind-Reading** and **Mind-Search** spells at level 20 (*SPELLS, P. 25*) without range penalties.

Venomous Bite. Make a HT-4 roll. Failure inflicts **paralysis** for hours equal to margin of failure. Success results in **2d control** damage that wears off in an hour.

SPELLS (ALL SPELLS AT LEVEL 20)

- ⌚ Affect Spirits-20
- ⌚ Astral Block-20
- ⌚ Aura-20
- ⌚ Bless-20
- ⌚ Blur-20
- ⌚ Bravery-20
- ⌚ Compel Truth-20
- ⌚ Daze-20
- ⌚ Dispel Magic-20
- ⌚ Dispel Possession-20
- ⌚ Divert Teleport-20
- ⌚ Earthquake-20
- ⌚ Entombment-20
- ⌚ Mage Sight-20
- ⌚ Mass Daze-20
- ⌚ Mass Sleep-20
- ⌚ Missile Shield-20
- ⌚ Phase-20
- ⌚ Remove Curse-20
- ⌚ See Secrets-20
- ⌚ Sleep-20
- ⌚ Stone to Flesh-20
- ⌚ Sunbolt-20
- ⌚ Sunlight-20
- ⌚ Teleport Shield-20
- ⌚ Terror-20
- ⌚ Truthsayer-20
- ⌚ Walk Through Earth-20
- ⌚ Windstorm-20

World Vision. The *couatl* can see as if under the influence of permanent **Astral Vision (SPELLS, P. 42)** and **Bright Vision (SPELLS, P. 46)**. It may choose to be affected by **Earth Vision (SPELLS, P. 27)**, **Plant Vision (SPELLS, P. 62)** or **Water Vision (SPELLS, P. 71)** at will.

World Walk. Requires a **Concentrate** maneuver to visit the space between worlds, but can return as a free action. While away, treat it as per **Ethereal Body (SPELLS, P. 57)** but invisible to those without **Astral Sight** or similar. It can attack on the turn it returns and the victim can't defend unless they have one of those abilities. Ignores its own **Astral Block** and **Teleport Shield**.



COUATL BLESSED

Association—not always strictly voluntary—with a *couatl* can change a creature into something ... else. Those who have served a *couatl*, or is a descendant of such a servant, may be indelibly marked by such fraternization.

LESSER BLESSING

The creature has become attuned to Nightmare, all the better to stamp it out: It preferentially seeks out corrupted targets in combat.

TRAITS

- ⌚ Unnatural Feature (Feathers)
- ⌚ Resistant to Poison 3
- ⌚ Detect (Nightmare Corruption)

SPELLS

Spells do not require Magery, Power Investiture, Holiness, etc. They just *work*.

- ⌚ Affect Spirits-15
- ⌚ Astral Vision-15 (Permanent)
- ⌚ Blur-15
- ⌚ Bright Vision-15 (Permanent)
- ⌚ Sunbolt-15
- ⌚ Sunlight-15

ATTACKS

- ⌚ **Venomous Bite (Fangs):** 2d control; halved with successful HT roll. Wears off after 10 minutes.

GREATER BLESSING

Includes **lesser blessing**, but with the following changes

TRAITS

- ⌚ Energy Reserve equal to half the creature's ST
- ⌚ Resistant to Poison 6
- ⌚ Flight (Winged) at 2×Move

SPELLS

- ⌚ Affect Spirits-17
- ⌚ Astral Vision-17 (Permanent)
- ⌚ Blur-17
- ⌚ Bright Vision-17 (Permanent)
- ⌚ Earth Vision-17 (at will)
- ⌚ Missile Shield-17
- ⌚ Phase-17
- ⌚ Plant Vision-17 (at will)
- ⌚ See Secrets-17
- ⌚ Sunbolt-17
- ⌚ Sunlight-17
- ⌚ Terror-17
- ⌚ Water vision (at will)

ATTACKS

- ⌚ **Venomous Bite (Fangs):** Roll HT-2 to avoid **paralysis**, 1d control on a success. Effects last 1 hour.

MINIONS

Some *couatls* operate alone. Others surround themselves with giant snakes, *snákamaðr* and other snake monsters. A *couatl* that guards a corrupted site may also ally with a *verndanda* (*NORDLOND BESTIARY, P. 183*).

THE HAND

This veteran *snákamaðr* archer serves as a *couatl*'s right-hand (well, only hand) man or envoy. With his wings furled on his back as a feathered cloak, he could pass as a human were it not for his vertical pupils, tufts of feathers and patches of scales.

FEATHERED GIANT VIPER

These creatures look like normal *giant vipers* (*MONSTERS, P. 31*), except covered in feathers. Light bends around them at all times, giving them a blurred appearance. They are often found in a *couatl*'s retinue but otherwise inhabit the same environments as ordinary vipers.

FLYING VIPER

These snakes appear as normal vipers (*NORDLOND BESTIARY, P. 185*) but with feathers and wings. Flocks of them sometimes live with a *couatl*, but can otherwise be found in most environments. And just when you thought flying rats would be bad ...

THE HAND

Mundane (Winged Humanoid)

When a *couatl* must act with some subtlety, it calls upon a servant similar to The Hand.

TACTICS

The Hand prefers to quick-shoot his bow from the air, protected by **Missile Shield**. If forced into close quarters he casts **Blur**, and uses **Terror** for crowd control. He uses **Phase** and **acrobatic dodge** to defend. Always targets Nightmare-corrupted targets first.

EQUIPMENT

Gear includes a **balanced elven longbow** (\$4,200), a **heavy hip quiver** with 20 fine bodkin and 20 fine regular arrows, and a suit of **light mail armor** enchanted with **Deflect 1**, **Fortify 1**, and **Lighten -25%** (\$6,500). The Hand envenoms his arrows with his own venom. No encumbrance.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Detect Nightmare. Has **Perception-26** for the purpose of detecting Nightmare corruption at range. Can use the sense to target attacks.

Venom. Take **2d toxic** damage and make a **HT-2** roll. Failure inflicts **paralysis** for hours equal to margin of failure. Success yields **1d control** damage; it wears off after an hour.

Couatl-Blessed. The Hand is the recipient of a *couatl's* greater blessing, including **Flight (Move 14)** and permanent **Astral Vision** and **Bright Vision**.

TRAITS

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| ⦿ Acute Detect 12 | ⦿ Heroic Archer |
| ⦿ Cold-Blooded | ⦿ Immunity to Poison |
| ⦿ Combat Reflexes | ⦿ Infravision |
| ⦿ Detect (Nightmare Corruption) | ⦿ Nictitating Membrane 1 |
| ⦿ Energy Reserve 6 | ⦿ Strongbow |
| ⦿ Flexibility | ⦿ Subsonic Hearing |
| ⦿ Flight (Winged, Move 14) | |

SKILLS

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| ⦿ Acrobatics-15 | ⦿ Hiking-14 |
| ⦿ Bow-18 | ⦿ Intimidation-14 |
| ⦿ Brawling-16 | ⦿ Observation-15 |
| ⦿ Climbing-12 | ⦿ Stealth-15 |
| ⦿ Detect Lies-14 | ⦿ Survival-14 |
| ⦿ Diplomacy-14 | ⦿ Tracking-15 |
| ⦿ Fast-Draw (Arrow)-16 | ⦿ Wrestling-15 |

SPELLS

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| ⦿ Affect Spirits-17 | ⦿ See Secrets-17 |
| ⦿ Blur-17 | ⦿ Sunbolt-17 |
| ⦿ Missile Shield-17 | ⦿ Sunlight-17 |
| ⦿ Phase-17 | ⦿ Terror-17 |

ST 13**DX 13****K 12****HT 12****HP 13****WILL 14****PER 14****FP 16**

Control Thresholds

≥0.1×CM **≥1/2×CM** **≥CM** **≥1.5×CM** **≥2×CM****2****8****15****23****30****DMG** **1d/2d-1****BASIC LIFT** **34**

DEFENSES

Parry**Dodge****Block****DR****SPEED** **7.00****—****12****—****5/3*****MOVE****7**

ATTACKS

⦿ Bite (16): 1d impaling plus venom follow-up. Reach C.**⦿ Claw (16):** 1d cutting. Reach C.**⦿ Grapple (15):** 1d+3 control. Reach C.**⦿ Bow (18):** 1d+5 impaling or 1d+5 (2) piercing plus Venom follow-up. Range 255/340. Acc 4, Shots 1 (2); Bulk -8.

FEATHERED GIANT VIPER

Animal, Dire (Vermiform)

These creatures look like normal *giant vipers* (*MONSTERS, P. 31*), except covered in feathers. Light bends around them at all times, giving them a blurred appearance. They are often found in a *couatl's* retinue but otherwise inhabit the same environments as ordinary vipers.

TACTICS

- ❖ Ambusher (Ground Clutter)
- ❖ Primary Target (Nightmare Corrupted)
- ❖ Spellcaster

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blur-snake. The feathered giant viper maintains **Blur** (*SPELLS, P. 46*) at maximum energy at no cost. All attacks against it are at -5. The sum of this and darkness penalties can't exceed -10.

Detect Nightmare. Has **Perception-24** with respect to detecting persons, places, or objects influenced by Nightmare corruption. Can target detected objects in combat or with spells.

Minor World Vision. The viper can see as if under the influence of permanent **Astral Vision** (*SPELLS, P. 42*) and **Bright Vision** (*SPELLS, P. 46*).

Pain Toxin. **2d** toxic damage. Roll **HT-2**; failure results in **severe** pain. Make a **HT-1** roll every day after the bite; success ends the pain.

Sneaky Snake. **Stealth-18** vs **Hearing** if moving; **Stealth-21** vs **Hearing** if stationary.

TRAITS

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| ❖ Acute Detect 13 | ❖ Nictitating Membrane 2 |
| ❖ Cold-Blooded | ❖ Resistant to Poison 3 |
| ❖ Combat Reflexes | ❖ Silence 3 |
| ❖ Detect (Nightmare Corruption) | ❖ Striking ST 3 |
| ❖ Enhanced Dodge 1 | ❖ Subsonic Hearing |
| ❖ Infravision | ❖ Vermiform |
| | ❖ Wild Animal |

SKILLS

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| ❖ Brawling-16 | ❖ Stealth-15 |
| ❖ Innate Attack-16 | |

SPELLS

- | |
|---------------------|
| ❖ Affect Spirits-15 |
| ❖ Sunlight-15 |

ST 15 DX 14 IQ 3 HT 12

HP 15 WILL 11 PER 11 FP 16

Control Thresholds

≥0.1×CM	≥1/2×CM	≥CM	≥1.5×CM	≥2×CM
---------	---------	-----	---------	-------

2	8	15	23	30
---	---	----	----	----

DMG 1d+2/3d

BASIC LIFT 45

Defenses

Parry	Dodge	Block	DR	SPEED	7.00
-------	-------	-------	----	-------	------

—	12	—	2	MOVE	7
---	----	---	---	------	---

ATTACKS

❖ **Bite (16):** 1d+2 (2) impaling plus pain toxin follow-up.

Reach C, 1. Treat as weapon, not as body part.

❖ **Sunbolt (16):** 3d burning. Range 75/150, Acc 2, RoF 1, Shots 1. Roll 1d each turn. On a 1, the ability can be used again.



FLYING VIPER

Animal, Dire (Vermiform)

These snakes appear as normal vipers (*NORDLOND BESTIARY*, p. 185) but with feathers and wings. Flocks of them sometimes live with a *couatl*, but can otherwise be found in most environments. And just when you thought flying rats would be bad ...

TACTICS

- ❖ Ambusher (Attack from Above)
- ❖ Defensive Fighter
- ❖ Never Just One
- ❖ Primary Target (Nightmare Corrupted)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Detect Nightmare. Has Perception-22 with respect to detecting persons, places, or objects influenced by Nightmare corruption. Can target detected objects in combat.

Minor World Vision. The viper can see as if under the influence of permanent **Astral Vision** (*SPELLS*, p. 42) and **Bright Vision** (*SPELLS*, p. 46).

Venom. Take 2d toxic damage and make a HT roll. Failure induces **nausea**. Make a HT roll every day after being poisoned; success ends the nausea.

TRAITS

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ❖ Acute Detect 12 | ❖ Resistant to Poison 3 |
| ❖ Cold-Blooded | ❖ Temperature Tolerance 1 |
| ❖ Detect (Nightmare Corruption) | ❖ Vermiform |
| ❖ Flight (Winged); Move 12 | ❖ Wild Animal |
| ❖ Infravision | |

SKILLS

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| ❖ Brawling-15 | ❖ Stealth-13 |
| ❖ Innate Attack-16 | |

ST 4

DX 13

K 2

HT 11

HP 4

WILL 8

PER 10

FP 11

Control Thresholds

$\geq 0.1 \times CM$	$\geq 1/2 \times CM$	$\geq CM$	$\geq 1.5 \times CM$	$\geq 2 \times CM$	DMG 1d-5/1d-4
0	2	4	6	8	BASIC LIFT 3.2

Defenses				SPEED	6.00
Parry	Dodge	Block	DR		
—	9	—	—	MOVE	6

ATTACKS

❖ **Bite (15):** 1d-4 impaling plus **venom** follow-up. Reach C, 1.

❖ **Poison Spit (16):** See **venom**—DR affects toxic damage normally. Range 10/20. Acc 2.



GORGON

On rare occasions, a mortal suffering from nightmares has the misfortune to briefly touch nightmare dreamscapes with those of the World Worm. This contact is enough for incomprehensible thoughts of doom to poison the dreamer's mind. They awaken preoccupied with an inexplicable feeling of dread, unable to cast it off and find comfort. Their nightmares grow more severe over the course of several weeks. Their ability to communicate deteriorates as alien thoughts cloud their mind. Eventually, something breaks in them during a particularly harrowing night. They abandon their previous lives and wander into the wilderness.

They're drawn to a remote location as a physical transformation takes place. They grow scales; nails and teeth harden into claws and fangs; pupils turn into vertical slits. Most horrifically, their hair falls out and vipers grow out of their head in its stead. A gorgon is born, only the tiniest shreds of its former consciousness hidden under an inscrutable mind.

A gorgon treats mortals as useful tools at best, insects at worst. Its only interest is furthering Nightmare corruption and the World Worm's demise. It can be subtle, willing to achieve its goals through convoluted means. To others, its motives are indiscernible: delvers treating with a gorgon are at -3 to any **Influence Skills** and **Empathy** rolls, and halve their **Reaction Bonuses**. A gorgon enjoys only the company of snakes and snake monsters. Such creatures always react to gorgons with at least a **Good** reaction and never attack them unprovoked.

Gorgons are rarely encountered alone. They usually surround themselves with entourages of enthralled mortals and snake creature allies. Most lair in places corrupted by the World Nightmare. There they establish cults that build weird snake-themed monuments and conduct profane rituals. A few ally themselves with evil creatures and lend their entourages to a cause they believe can further their own ends.

Gorgon Venom. The toxin secreted by gorgons and their brethren is an unusual and potent **psychotic toxin** (*NORDLOND BESTIARY, P. 22*). It deals **2d toxic** damage, and the victim must roll vs. HT-4 to avoid **nausea**. Separately, roll again vs HT-4, with failure indicating the victim begins **hallucinating** for 1d hours (*EXPLOITS, P. 66*); a critical failure on this roll sees the victim slipping into a **Nightmare Coma**.

Minions. Every gorgon worth its salt has a large entourage of allies and thralls (for greater gorgons). Through exposure to corrupting energies of the World Nightmare, these followers often resemble mutant snake monsters. See [Fórnsnake](#), [Gorgonoid](#), and [Snakebear](#).

Nightmare Coma. Less a toxic effect than an eldritch **curse**. While in the coma, the victim suffers repeated visions of the World Worm's demise. The coma lasts until **Remove Curse** is cast on the victim; anything else won't work. Upon awakening, the subject must make an immediate Fright Check at -10; likely obtaining a new disadvantage, which is considered [Nightmare Corruption](#). GMs should lean hard on [Cult Personalities](#) when selecting them. Non-sapient creatures—such as animals or sentient plants—see their systems overwhelmed, falling into an irreversible **coma-like** state (no HT roll to recover after 12 hours).

Sneaky Snake. The gorgon's **Silence 4** gives them **+4 to Stealth** vs **Hearing** while moving, **+8** while motionless.

Telepathy. A gorgon may send its thoughts to *any creature* it can see within 100 yards as a free action (the recipient must be capable of understanding those thoughts).



GORGON (HÖGGORMUR MARTRÖÐ)

Mundane

In Nordlond, the gorgon is also known as the höggormur martröð, the serpent nightmare. This sometimes gets them confused with the martröð, a dangerous mistake.

Tactics

- Back-Row Commander
- Cunning
- Never Just One
- One for the Team

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Cobra Lieutenant. The gorgon may command any snake within 100 yards, granting the following abilities:

- Minions within range gain **Higher Purpose 1 (Protect the Gorgon):** +1 to all attack, defense, damage, and resistance rolls in combat.
- The gorgon may invoke [One for The Team](#) on any serpent within range
- The gorgon may invoke [Advice](#) or [Encouragement](#) from *Onward to Victory (EXPLOITS, P. 57)*; this still requires a [Do Nothing](#) maneuver on the part of the gorgon.

Nightmare Gaze. Anyone failing to avoid looking at the gorgon's face within 100 yards from its front hexes must win a Quick Contest of Will each second or suffer a **Nightmare Coma** (see [Avoiding Gaze Attacks](#) for details on averting or hiding one's eyes). The gorgon may exclude specific targets if it wishes so, or even cancel the effect. Serpents and related creatures are immune, as are **Constructs**, **Elder Things**, and **Slimes**.

TRAITS

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • 360° Vision | • Immunity to Mind Control and Poison |
| • Callous | • Nictitating Membrane 2 |
| • Cold-Blooded | • No Sense of Humor |
| • Combat Reflexes | • Silence 4 |
| • Double-Jointed | • Strongbow |
| • Extra Attack 4 (Hair only) | • Subsonic Hearing |
| • Infravision | • Unfazeable |

ST 11

DX 12

K 14

HT 13

HP 11

WILL 16

PER 14

FP 13

Control Thresholds

≥0.1×CM ≥½×CM ≥CM ≥1.5×CM ≥2×CM

1 6 11 17 22

SM 0

DMG 1d-1/1d+1

BASIC LIFT 24

DEFENSES

Parry Dodge Block DR

11 12 — 2 MOVE 8

ATTACKS

- **Bite (14):** 1d-1 (2) impaling and **gorgon venom** follow-up. Reach C.
- **Claw (14):** 1d-1 (2) cutting. Reach C.
- **Composite Bow (16):** 1d+3 (2) piercing and **gorgon venom** follow-up. Range 260/325. Acc 3, Bulk -7.
- **Grapple (12):** 1d-1 control. Reach C.
- **Viper Hair (16):** 1d-1 (2) impaling and **gorgon venom** follow-up. Reach C. Treat as weapon, not as body part.

SKILLS

- Bow-16
- Brawling-14
- Fast-Draw (Arrow)-14
- Stealth-14
- Swimming-13
- Tactics-13

GORGON, GREATER

Mundane (Vermitaur)

Exposure to Nightmare energies eventually transforms a gorgon even further. Retreating to a secure spot guarded by its entourage, the gorgon sheds its skin and uses it to form a cocoon. After about a week it emerges larger and stronger, with a serpentine tail where its legs once used to be, its mental powers stronger still. While physically vulnerable during the transformation, a gorgon is by no means helpless. It lies in a dream state, but can make use of **Cobra Commander** as well as utilize **Nightmare Thralls** as soon as the transformation begins. It is especially careful not to draw attention with their activities while it is transforming.

TACTICS

- ❖ Back-Row Commander
- ❖ Cunning
- ❖ Never Just One
- ❖ One for the Team

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Cobra Commander. The greater gorgon may command any snake within 100 yards, granting the following abilities:

- ❖ Minions within range gain **Higher Purpose 1 (Protect the Gorgon)**: +1 to all attack, defense, damage, and resistance rolls in combat.
- ❖ The gorgon may invoke [One for The Team](#) on any serpent within range
- ❖ The gorgon may invoke **Advice** or **Encouragement** from *Onward to Victory* (**EXPLOITS, P. 57**); this still requires a **Do Nothing** maneuver on the part of the gorgon.
- ❖ Greater gorgons blend all their minions' senses into one whole, effectively giving both a **Vision-** and **Hearing-** based **Detect** ability extending for 100 yards in every direction where there are snakes ... and the greater gorgon ensures there are *always* snakes.

Nightmare Gaze. Anyone failing to avoid looking at the gorgon's face within 100 yards from its front hexes must win a Quick Contest of **Will** each second or suffer a **Nightmare Coma** (see [Avoiding Gaze Attacks](#) for details on averting or hiding one's eyes). The gorgon may exclude specific targets if it wishes so, or even cancel the effect. Serpents and related creatures are immune, as are **Constructs**, **Elder Things**, and **Slimes**.

Nightmare Thrall. A greater gorgon may invade the mind of anyone in a **Nightmare Coma**, or who has obtained even a 1-point disadvantage from [Nightmare Corruption](#). The gorgon takes a **Concentrate** maneuver, and must win a **Quick Contest of Will**, subject to *Long-Distance Modifiers* (**SPELLS, P. 14**). If it wins, the subject behaves as if under the effects of **Charm** (**SPELLS, P. 53**). Enthralling targets respond to gorgon telepathy *regardless of range*. This effect is *permanent* until the gorgon ends the effect or the victim is subject to **Remove Curse**. Charmed servants eventually become [Gorgonoids](#).

ST 20 DX 12 IQ 14 HT 13

HP 20 WILL 20 PER 16 FP 13

Control Thresholds

≥0.1×CM	≥1/2×CM	≥CM	≥1.5×CM	≥2×CM	D _{MG} 2d-1/3d+2
---------	---------	-----	---------	-------	---------------------------

2	11	22	33	44	BASIC LIFT 80
---	----	----	----	----	---------------

Defenses

Parry	Dodge	Block	DR	SPEED 8.00
-------	-------	-------	----	------------

12	12	—	3	MOVE 8
----	----	---	---	--------

ATTACKS

- ❖ **Bite (16):** 2d(2) impaling and **gorgon venom** follow-up. Reach C-1.
- ❖ **Claw (16):** 2d(2) cutting. Reach C-1.
- ❖ **Composite Bow (18):** 2d+7 (2) piercing and **gorgon venom** follow-up. Range 260/325. Acc 3, Bulk -7.
- ❖ **Constriction (16):** 2d+4 control. Reach C-1. Counts as weapon, not as body part.
- ❖ **Viper Hair (18):** 2d(2) impaling and **gorgon venom** follow-up. Reach C-1. Treat as weapon, not as body part.

TRAITS

- ❖ 360° Vision
- ❖ Amphibious
- ❖ Callous
- ❖ Cold-Blooded
- ❖ Combat Reflexes
- ❖ Detect (Sight and Sound)
- ❖ Double-Jointed
- ❖ Extra Attack 4 (Hair only)
- ❖ Heroic Archer
- ❖ Infravision
- ❖ Immunity to Mind Control
- ❖ Immunity to Poison
- ❖ Nictitating Membrane 3
- ❖ No Sense of Humor
- ❖ Silence 4
- ❖ Slithers
- ❖ Strongbow
- ❖ Subsonic Hearing
- ❖ Unfazeable
- ❖ Weapon Master (Bow)

SKILLS

- ❖ Bow-18
- ❖ Brawling-16
- ❖ Fast-Draw (Arrow)-16
- ❖ Stealth-16
- ❖ Strategy-13
- ❖ Swimming-13
- ❖ Tactics-15
- ❖ Wrestling-16



FÓRNSNAKE

Animal, Dire (Vermiform)

Fórnsnakes are miniature constrictors the size of regular *vipers* (*NORDLOND BESTIARY, p. 185*). They are disproportionately strong for their size. They may have originated as results of Nightmare corruption, but have since then spread through the world and now breed true. Fórnsnakes are always found in clutches and gorgons love having dozens of them around.

Fórnsnakes jump at their victims' limbs and necks, wrap around them and constrict. Once they reach their **Control Maximum**, they expend control to inflict damage.

The fórnsnake can swim at Move 1.

TACTICS

- ❖ Ambusher (Attack from Above)
- ❖ Reckless

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Springing Grapple. The fórnsnake initiates its grapples by jumping at the target. Treat this as a **Move and Attack** without the usual penalties to the attack roll.

Venomous Death Throes. The creature explodes in a cloud of poison when defeated. This deals **2d toxic** damage to anyone in a 2-yard radius area of effect. A successful **HT** roll halves the damage. If delvers can leave the area with a step, a successful dodge and retreat prevents damage. Due to surprise, delvers may not do this the first time they witness a specific kind of adversary exploding like this.

SKILLS

- ❖ Jumping-16
- ❖ Stealth-13
- ❖ Swimming-14
- ❖ Wrestling-16

ST 4

DX 14

K 2

HT 11

HP 4

WILL 8

PER 10

FP 11

Control Thresholds

≥0.1×CM ≥1/2×CM ≥CM ≥1.5×CM ≥2×CM

1 6 11 17 22

D_{MG} 1d-5/1d-4

BASIC LIFT 16

Defenses

Parry Dodge Block DR

— 9 — —

SPEED 6.25

MOVE 8

ATTACKS

- ❖ Grapple (16): 1d control. Reach C.

TRAITS

- ❖ Catfall
- ❖ Cold-Blooded
- ❖ Infravision
- ❖ Lifting ST 5
- ❖ Resistant to Poison 3

- ❖ Subsonic Hearing
- ❖ Unfazeable
- ❖ Vermiform
- ❖ Wild Animal



GORGONOID

Mundane

This hulking brute was once a human thrall to the gorgon. The gorgon's careful application of Nightmare energies have transformed it into a scaled, bipedal, snake-headed monster with snakes instead of arms and hair. It obeys its master without question.

The gorgonoid is a straightforward adversary. It charges into battle with a **slam**, and then uses its constrictor arms to grapple an unfortunate victim in close combat. It supplements this with its snake hair. It only spits poison when it can't reach an opponent.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Meatshield Parry. The gorgonoid may parry and block attacks using a grappled foe! It must win a Quick Contest of half their ST-based Sumo Wrestling (Sumo Wrestling-29, halved to Sumo Wrestling-14) versus the best ST-based grappling skill of the meat-shield. If they win, the poor sap is pulled into the path of the blow ... they can use any legal active defense to fend off the attack, but if it fails, it hits them.

Venomous Death Throes. The creature explodes in a cloud of poison when defeated. This deals **3d toxic** damage to anyone in a 3-yard radius area of effect. A successful **HT-2** roll halves the damage. If delvers can leave the area with a step, a successful dodge and retreat prevents damage. Due to surprise, delvers may not do this the first time they witness a specific kind of adversary exploding like this.



ST 23

DX 12

K 8

HT 13

HP 30

WILL 12

PER 10

FP 13

Control Thresholds

≥0.1×CM ≥1/2×CM ≥CM ≥1.5×CM ≥2×CM

3 13 25 38 50

DMG 2d+1/4d+1

BASIC LIFT 106

Defenses

Parry Dodge Block DR SPEED 6.25

13 10 — 5 MOVE 8

ATTACKS

Constrictor Viper Arms (18): 2d+2 impaling and control plus 2d toxic follow-up, halved with HT-2 roll. Reach C, 1. Treat as weapons, not as body parts. Can parry 2x per turn if not grappling.

Poison Spit (18): 2d toxic, halved on successful HT-2 roll. Range 10, Acc 2. DR does not protect.

Snake Hair (18): 2d+2 (2) impaling plus 2d toxic follow-up. Reach C, 1. HT-2 roll halves toxic damage. Treat as weapon, not as body part.

Sumo Slam (16): 2d+4 crushing or 2d+12 crushing (Move 8).

TRAITS

- 360° Vision
- Amphibious
- Bad Temper (12)
- Bloodlust (12)
- Cold-Blooded
- Combat Reflexes
- Extra Attack 1 (Hair only)
- Flexibility
- High Pain Threshold
- Infravision
- Nictitating Membrane 3
- Resistant to Poison 6
- Slippery
- Subsonic Hearing
- Unfazeable

SKILLS

- Brawling-18
- Climbing-14

- Intimidation-14
- Sumo Wrestling-16

SNAKEBEAR

Hybrid (Quadruped)

This is an example of what happens when wild animals lair in a location corrupted by Nightmare. Gorgons sometimes pick them up into their entourages, but they may also live independently.

This specimen has the body of a bear with several exceptions. First, it has a head disturbingly halfway between that of a bear and that of a viper, with pointy fangs, forked tongue and vertical pupils. Secondly, scales cover its body with patches of brown fur growing through. Thirdly, it has a snake growing from its back, flailing about and striking at foes. Finally, it has a massive snake tail it uses to move.

A snakebear grapples its victim and bites it once it has established a firm hold. It uses its snaky appendage in the meantime. It only uses its claws as a last resort.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Brood Host. Snakebears are infested with swarms of small vipers. When injured, a hex of *snake swarm* (**BESTIARY, p. 54**) bursts forth from the wound. This can happen twice.

Special Bonus Snake. The creature has a snake growing out of its body, attached at the tail. The snake counts as a weapon but cannot parry. It can be targeted at -2, has DR 3, and is crippled if it takes 9 HP of damage in one blow.

Vestigial Legs. The snakebear has legs but rarely uses them. “Crippling” results in a major wound, but no additional effects (such as falling down or Lame).

TRAITS

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| .Bad Temper (9) | Poor Vision 2 |
| .Constriction Attack | Resistant to Poison 6 |
| .Discriminatory Smell | Semi-Upright |
| .Extra Attack 1 (Special Bonus Snake only) | Special Bonus Snake |
| .Infravision | Subsonic Hearing |
| .Nictitating Membrane 1 | Temperature Tolerance 2 (Cold) |
| .No Fine Manipulators | Wild Animal |

SKILLS

- Brawling-13
- Swimming-13 (Water Move 2)
- Wrestling-13

ST 19 DX 10 IQ 3 HT 13

HP 19 WILL 10 PER 12 FP 13

Control Thresholds

≥0.1×CM	≥1/2×CM	≥CM	≥1.5×CM	≥2×CM
---------	---------	-----	---------	-------

3	11	21	32	42
---	----	----	----	----

D_{MG} 2d-1/3d+1

BASIC LIFT 72

Defenses

Parry	Dodge	Block	DR	SPEED	MOVE
-------	-------	-------	----	-------	------

—	9	—	3	6.00	8
---	---	---	---	------	---

ATTACKS

- **Bite (13):** 2d impaling plus 2d toxic follow-up, halved on a HT roll. Reach C, 1.
- **Bonus Snake (13):** 2d+3 impaling plus 2d toxic follow-up, halved on a HT roll. Reach C, 1. Treat as weapon, not as body part.
- **Claw (13):** 2d crushing. Reach C, 1.
- **Grapple (13):** 2d+2 control. Reach C, 1.



HYDRA

"I'm no longer allowed to create monstrosities by myself, but putting the idea into the head of a patsy? That's allowed." –God of Mischief

"Helvítis lögfræðingar reglna!" –The Allfather

Plodding along on four stubby crocodile legs, the hydra is a massive scaled monstrosity. Its many snakelike heads bristle with razor-sharp teeth. According to legends, it originates from the Lernaean region of Morevel. A mad wizard created it under divine inspiration to defeat a rival. It did its task well and has since spread all over the world.

The hydra is a savage, unsubtle predator which lairs in caverns, thickets, and swamps. It is equally at home on land and in water. It stakes out a territory several miles across where no beast dares challenge it. A solitary creature, it reproduces asexually by *budding*. Once ready to reproduce, it sheds up to several dozen spawn from its body. The parent does not care for its offspring but doesn't mind them either. The spawn fight until only a handful remains. The survivors stay with the parent for a while, scavenging food off its kills. The parent chases the juveniles away when it starts viewing them as competition. Rarely, multiple adult hydras nest together.

Hydras are sometimes used as guardians by powerful individuals. They also don't mind teaming up with other snake monsters. To everyone else, they react with aggression.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hydras have many unique features, the most obvious of which are the many serpentine heads. These animals seem almost infinitely mutable, with three core subtypes (each given their own write-up), and many observed variants.

UNIVERSAL ABILITIES

These are considerations for all hydra variants, and any or all might apply to an individual.

Disease-Ridden. This specimen is an immune carrier of a nasty dungeon malady. Pick one of the nasty *Monstrous Diseases* (*NORDLOND BESTIARY, PP. 23–24*) and a delver is exposed if bitten; **lung plague** and **fungal infections** may be acquired by approaching within a yard of the foe! Only roll for infection after the encounter is over.

Fast Regeneration (Mundane). Only mundane damage regenerates ... but it does so at 5–10× the normal rate. Damage from spells and enchanted, blessed, or holy weapons can cripple the heads and does not regenerate.

Fiendish/Unholy. Infused with an extra helping of unholy energies. Only blessed weapons or holy warriors can cripple the heads of this hydra. Most common on skeletal hydras ...

but a nasty surprise on other variants. In addition to their basic type, fiendish hydras are **demons**; unholy hydras are **undead**.

Flying. Wings provide **Flight** at double its ground move.

Lernaean. The mother of all hydras. Increase **Regeneration** to 10 HP per second. Only cutting damage to the neck can cripple its heads, which severs them. It regrows 1d heads each turn. Lernaean pyrohydras do not regenerate acid damage, lernaean oxyhydras do not regenerate fire damage, other adaptataions are susceptible to both. The writhing neck of a severed head can still dodge. A particularly evil GM will have two heads regrow in place of each severed one ...

Regeneration. Will not regenerate heads crippled by fire or acid. .

Septic Bite. Poor dental hygiene can kill! As per **Disease-Ridden**, but any hydra may have a septic bite.

Serpentine. Has **Vermiform** instead of **Extra Legs**.

Spawn Catapult. The hydra can fling a spawn of its same type as a ranged attack with skill 12, range 10; it may target a hex at +4 to skill. Use *Scatter* rules on a miss (*EXPLOITS, P. 45*). The spawn takes its place in the turn order and acts normally as soon as it comes up. It can launch multiple spawn per turn, each taking up one of its attacks.

Venomous. The creature gains **Resistant to Poison 3**, **Venomous Bite (Fangs)**, and is *immune* to its own venom. A “typical” venom adds toxic damage based on the **thrust** damage for 2/3 the hydra's ST, halved on a successful HT roll. Some may be **Venom Spitters**, able to spit venom with Range 10, Acc 2, and DR does not protect. Alternatively pick a nasty toxin from the available options (*NORDLOND BESTIARY, PP. 21–22* or *Alternative Toxins*).

ADAPTED VARIANTS

The following variants seem to be adaptations of the hydra to climate and environment. A hydra (and its spawn) may have one of the following adaptations.

Cryohydra. Add **DR (Cold attacks only)** equal to the hydra's ST; **Temperature Tolerance 10 (Cold)** and **Terrain Adaptation (Ice and Snow)**. Adult and juvenile hydras also gain **Freezing Breath** at DX+4, inflicting **thrust burning and control** damage (e.g., a ST 21 pyrohydra inflicts 2d burning and control). The burn component has no incendiary effect; it is affected by cold resistance rather than fire resistance. It is a 5-yard-wide, 10-yard-long cone. Costs **2 FP** per use, only usable once per turn.

Electrohydra. Add DR (Electric attacks only) equal to the hydra's ST. Adult and juvenile hydras also gain **Lightning Breath** at DX+4, inflicting **thrust burning** damage (e.g., a ST 21 pyrohydra inflicts 2d burning). Metal armor only protects with DR 1 and the victim must make a HT roll, at -1 per 2 points of *injury* or be **physically stunned**. Failing the roll by 5 or more causes **heart attack**. 1-yard-wide x 20-yard-long cone. Costs 2 FP per use, only usable once per turn.

Hydrohydra. Add **Sonar** and **Enhanced Move (Water)**. Adult and juveniles gain **Water Jet** at DX+4, inflicting **thrust** damage, **triple knockback only** (e.g., a ST 21 hydrohydra inflicts 2d damage, tripled for knockback purposes). Range 20. May freely exchange the breath weapon for attacks.

Oxyhydra. Add DR (Corrosive attacks only; Does not corrode) equal to the hydra's ST. Adult and juvenile hydras also gain **Acid Breath** at DX+4, inflicting **thrust corrosive** damage (e.g., a ST 21 pyrohydra inflicts 2d corrosive damage). It is a 5-yard-wide, 10-yard-long cone. Costs 2 FP per use, only usable once per turn.

Pyrohydra. Add DR (Fire attacks only) equal to the hydra's ST; **Temperature Tolerance 10 (Heat)** and **Terrain Adaptation (Lava)**—it is *immune* to damage from lava, and swims in it for fun. Adult and juvenile hydras also gain **Flame Breath** at DX+4, inflicting **thrust burning** damage at +1 *per die* (e.g., a ST 21 pyrohydra inflicts 2d+2 burning). It has a 3-yard-radius area effect, Range 10. Costs 2 FP per use, only usable once per turn.

MANY-HEADED APEX PREDATOR

The hydras presented are good solitary boss monsters for a typical 250-point party. Well-optimized or higher-point parties might make short work out of it. Need more dakka?

Make it bigger. Every 10 ST added increases physical damage by 1d+1, and also increases breath weapon attacks and DR. Every 10 HP requires 5 more points per **injury** to **cripple** the heads. Greater SM means extra ST. Increase Reach by 1 at SM +4, by 3 at SM +5 or by 5 at SM +6.

Make it tougher. Even a couple points of DR can make it notably more difficult to cripple the heads. More than 10 DR is deserving of a truly epic party!

More heads! This increases both the number of attacks and the monster's longevity. Hydras with more heads are often also bigger and tougher.

Better bites! Adding an **armor divisor** of (2) makes it quite deadlier. Increasing skill to exchange for **Deceptive Attack** is almost required for some defensively minded parties.

Apply multiple variants. Fiendish and Lernaean are especially potent.

Add Magic Resistance. Four levels makes it hit the **Rule of 16**.

Alien mind. Apply blanket **Immunity to Mind Control**.

LIFE CYCLE

The following pages show fully grown examples, nasty and brutal. However, such a creature just might be too much for a delving party. That could serve as a warning to the next group of would-be adventurers not to go looking for many-headed snake-monsters, and a stern and proper message it would be. Even so: Hydra's don't start out fully formed and fully nasty. They have to grow up to become so.

Make the following modifications to an adult baseline:

SPAWN

After budding from the parent hydra, the hydra spawn slithers forward. Relatively small and with legs barely long enough to touch the ground, it is more serpent than not. Sneaky like one too.

Attributes: ST/HP, 9, DX 10, IQ 3, HT/HP 11. SM -1.

Will 10, Per 10, Damage 1d-2/1d-1. DR 1.

Basic Speed: 5.25, Move 3, Basic Lift 16.

Skills: Brawling-12, Stealth-14, Swimming-11

Traits: Nictitating Membrane 1; No Manipulators; Vermiform.

Removed Traits: Bad Temper; Extra Legs (Four Legs); Horizontal; No Fine Manipulators; Overconfidence; Resistant to Mind Control, Supernatural Durability.

GM Note: A single hydra spawn could threaten one of the less combat-capable 62-point delvers simply because of its multiple attacks. It should be no match for a combat-oriented 125-point delver. If encountered without their parent, they should outnumber delvers at least two to one to present a challenge. They have a lot of attacks, but deal little damage and often go down in a single hit.

JUVENILE

This hydra has gained almost all of its full abilities, but not yet attained its full growth. Nonetheless, it is strong for its size, and while it hasn't yet become a supernaturally durable delver-grinder, it is at its peak for speed and skill.

Attributes: ST/HP, 20, DX 14, IQ 6, HT/HP 12. SM +1.

Will 12, Per 12, Damage 2d-1/3d+2. DR 4

Skills: Brawling-16, Camouflage-18, Swimming-13

Traits: High Pain Threshold,

Nictitating Membrane 4.

Removed Traits: Supernatural Durability.

HYDRA

Animal, Dire (Quadruped)

If a many-headed dire mutant thing can be said to have a “normal” version, this is it.

TACTICS

- ⦿ Ambusher (Concealment)
- ⦿ Bulldozer
- ⦿ Dear or Alive, You’re Coming with Me
- ⦿ Distraction Tactics (Hydra Spawn)
- ⦿ Reckless

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hydra Tough. As long as it has more than one head remaining, a hydra is **immune to mental stun** and the effects of **Reeling** (at any HP level). A hydra gets +1 to resist mind-influencing effects per un-crippled head.

I Am Not an Animal. Creatures with IQ 6+ are too smart for Animal spells to work—use **Mind Control** magic.

So Many Heads. Hydras have many heads, with 5 being a reasonable minimum; more than 10 is not crazy, though it is rather deadly. A hydra gets one **Extra Attack** per head after the first, and loses them as the heads are crippled. Hydra heads are crippled as if they were limbs (*Crippling, EXPLOITS, p. 61*), but injured as per the **neck** hit location (*Hit Location and Injury, EXPLOITS, p. 54*). Once the hydra is down to its last head, it loses its **360° Vision**. The heads can only be crippled once the hydra is brought below 0 HP due to **Supernatural Durability**. A hydra dies once all its heads are crippled.

TRAITS

- ⦿ 360° Vision
- ⦿ Amphibious
- ⦿ Bad Temper
- ⦿ Combat Reflexes
- ⦿ Extra Attacks
- ⦿ Extra Heads
- ⦿ Extra Legs 2
- ⦿ Fragile
(Dies when all heads are crippled)
- ⦿ Horizontal
- ⦿ Nictitating Membrane 6
- ⦿ Night Vision 9
- ⦿ No Brain
- ⦿ No Fine Manipulators
- ⦿ No Vitals
- ⦿ Overconfidence
- ⦿ Regeneration
(1 HP per second)
- ⦿ Resistant to Mind Control
- ⦿ Supernatural Durability
(Can only be killed after all heads are crippled)
- ⦿ Temperature Tolerance 2
- ⦿ Unfazeable

SKILLS

- ⦿ Brawling-16
- ⦿ Camouflage-16
- ⦿ Swimming-14



ST 30

DX 12

IQ 6

HT 13

HP 30

Will 12

Per 12

FP 13

Control Thresholds

$\geq 0.1 \times CM$	$\geq 1/2 \times CM$	$\geq CM$	$\geq 1.5 \times CM$	$\geq 2 \times CM$	DMG	3d/5d+2
3	15	30	45	60		

SM 3

Parry	Dodge	Block	DR	SPEED	MOVE	6.25
—	10	—	6			

ATTACKS

- ⦿ **Bite (16):** 3d+2 cutting and control. Reach C-2. Treat as weapon, not as body part.
- ⦿ **Slam or Overrun (16):** 3d+1 crushing, 3d+10 crushing (Move 6).
- ⦿ **Trample:** (16) 3d+3 crushing. Automatically hits for half damage on overrun that knocks down the target.

HYDRA, CHTHONIC

Elemental (Quadruped)

This hydra is not a living thing but is instead made of rock. The first one was reportedly created by an elementalist rival of the wizard who created the original hydra.

TACTICS

- ⦿ Ambusher (Underground)
- ⦿ Bulldozer
- ⦿ Dear or Alive, You're Coming with Me
- ⦿ Distraction Tactics (Hydra Spawn)
- ⦿ Reckless

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bony/Stony. The skull has the same DR as the rest of the body.

Hydra Tough. As long as it has more than one head remaining, a hydra is **immune to mental stun** and the effects of **Reeling** (at any HP level). A hydra gets +1 to resist mind-influencing effects per un-crippled head.

Igneous Neck. Cutting attacks to a chthonic hydra's neck don't receive the improved $\times 2$ wounding multiplier.

So Many Heads. Hydras have many heads, with 5 being a reasonable minimum; more than 10 is not crazy, though it is rather deadly. A hydra gets one **Extra Attack** per head after the first, and loses them as the heads are crippled. Hydra heads are crippled as if they were limbs (*Crippling, EXPLOITS, P. 61*), but injured as per the **neck** hit location (*Hit Location and Injury, EXPLOITS, P. 54*). Once the hydra is down to its last head, it loses its **360° Vision**. The heads can only be crippled once the hydra is brought below 0 HP due to **Supernatural Durability**. A hydra dies once all its heads are crippled.

TRAITS

- ⦿ 360° Vision
- ⦿ Acute Vibration Sense 3
- ⦿ Bad Temper
- ⦿ Cannot Float
- ⦿ Combat Reflexes
- ⦿ Doesn't Breathe, Eat, Drink, or Sleep
- ⦿ Extra Attacks
- ⦿ Extra Heads
- ⦿ Extra Legs 2
- ⦿ Fragile (All heads crippled)
- ⦿ Horizontal
- ⦿ Immunity to Disease
- ⦿ Immunity to Poison
- ⦿ Injury Reduction 2
- ⦿ Limited Camouflage (Rocky Terrain)
- ⦿ Night Vision 9
- ⦿ No Blood
- ⦿ No Brain
- ⦿ No Eyes
- ⦿ No Fine Manipulators
- ⦿ No Sense of Smell/Taste
- ⦿ No Vitals
- ⦿ Overconfidence
- ⦿ Regeneration (1 HP per second)
- ⦿ Supernatural Durability (All heads crippled)
- ⦿ Temperature Tolerance 2
- ⦿ Tunneling (Move 6 earth and stone; Disrupted)
- ⦿ Unfazeable
- ⦿ Vibration Sense (Ground)
- ⦿ Vulnerability (Crushing, $\times 2$)

ST 30 DX 12 IQ 6 HT 13

HP 30 Will 12 Per 12 FP 13

Control Thresholds SM +3

$\geq 0.1 \times CM$	$\geq 1/2 \times CM$	$\geq CM$	$\geq 1.5 \times CM$	$\geq 2 \times CM$	DMG 3d/5d+2
3	15	30	45	60	BASIC LIFT 180

Defenses			SPEED 6.25
Parry	Dodge	Block	DR
—	10	—	6
MOVE		6	

ATTACKS

- ⦿ **Bite (16):** 3d+2 cutting and control. Reach C-2. Treat as a weapon, not as body part.
- ⦿ **Slam or Overrun (16):** 3d+1 crushing, 3d+10 crushing (Move 6).
- ⦿ **Trample:** (16): 3d+3 crushing. Automatically hits for half damage on overrun that knocks down the target.

SKILLS

- ⦿ Brawling-16 ⦿ Camouflage-16



HYDRA, SKELETAL

Undead (Quadruped)

Necromancers are the original makers of monsters, so they couldn't let some regular mad wizard upstage them. Many skeletal hydras are created by raising a dead hydra, but others are animated from the bones of giant snakes and other reptiles—these amalgams are **Constructs** and not subject to Turning or other abilities that depend on sending a departed spirit back to its proper home.

TACTICS

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| • Bulldozer | • Distraction Tactics (Hydra Spawn) |
| • Dear or Alive, You're Coming with Me | • Reckless |

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bony/Stony. The skull has the same DR as the rest of the body.

Hydra Tough. As long as it has more than one head remaining, a hydra is **immune to mental stun** and the effects of **Reeling** (at any HP level). Skeletal hydras are immune to all mind control effects.

So Many Heads. Hydras have many heads, with 5 being a reasonable minimum; more than 10 is not crazy, though it is rather deadly. A hydra gets one **Extra Attack** per head after the first, and loses them as the heads are crippled. Hydra heads are crippled as if they were limbs (*Crippling, EXPLOITS, p. 61*), but injured as per the **neck** hit location (*Hit Location and Injury, EXPLOITS, p. 54*). Once the hydra is down to its last head, it loses its **360° Vision**. The heads can only be crippled once the hydra is brought below 0 HP due to **Supernatural Durability**. A hydra dies once all its heads are crippled.

Unliving Means Unliving. Skeletal hydras don't reproduce. Up to 4d skeletal spawn must be purposefully packed into the creature by the original necromancer.

TRAITS

- | | |
|---|---|
| • 360° Vision | • No Blood |
| • Bad Temper | • No Brain |
| • Cannot Float | • No Eyes |
| • Combat Reflexes | • No Fine Manipulators |
| • Doesn't Breathe, Eat, Drink, or Sleep | • No Sense of Smell/Taste |
| • Extra Attacks | • No Vitals |
| • Extra Heads | • Overconfidence |
| • Extra Legs 2 | • Regeneration (1 HP per second) |
| • Fragile
(All heads crippled) | • Supernatural Durability
(All heads crippled) |
| • Horizontal | • Temperature Tolerance 5 |
| • Immunity to Disease | • Unfazeable |
| • Immunity to Mind Control | • Unliving |
| • Immunity to Poison | • Vulnerability (Crushing x2) |
| • Night Vision 9 | |

ST 30

DX 12

IQ 6

HT 13

HP 30

WILL 12

PER 12

FP 13

Control Thresholds

≥0.1×CM	≥1/2×CM	≥CM	≥1.5×CM	≥2×CM
---------	---------	-----	---------	-------

3	15	30	45	60	DMG 3d/5d+2
---	----	----	----	----	-------------

BASIC LIFT 180

Defenses				SPEED	8.25
Parry	Dodge	Block	DR		
—	12	—	8	MOVE	8

ATTACKS

- **Bite (16):** 3d+2 cutting and control. Reach C-2. Treat as a weapon, not as body part.
- **Slam or Overrun (16):** 3d+1 crushing, 3d+10 crushing (Move 6).
- **Trample: (16):** 3d+3 crushing. Automatically hits for half damage on overrun that knocks down the target.

SKILLS

• Brawling-16

• Camouflage-16





JARÐORMUR

bear great knowledge due to their extreme lifespans. They speak slowly in deep, rumbling voices, requiring great patience from their interlocutors.

No jarðormur likes the intrusion of civilization into its territory. Only those who are respectful of nature can hope to coexist with them. Activities such as woodcutting, mining or heavy traffic attract the jarðormur's attention.

Over-hunting and establishing any kind of industry or settlements does it quicker.

Some jarðorma issue a warning first, but even the gentlest attack to drive off the interlopers if their warnings are ignored. Their rage is terrible to behold, causing catastrophic destruction. Luckily for civilized folk, jarðorma avoid settled lands. One would need to have an exceptional reason to venture into civilization.

BIGGER IS (MOSTLY) BETTER

All Out Destruction. The jarðormur's favorite tactic is an **All Out Attack (Determined)** to **swallow whole** one target and **overrun** as many secondary targets as it can put in its way. It reserves all of its attacks for the primary target to maximize chance of success. If half **Move** is not enough to **overrun** multiple foes but full **Move** is, it **slams** two targets and **overruns** the rest. This allows it to spend its full **Move**. It always converts **All Out Attack (Determined)** into **Deceptive Attack**, penalizing defenses by -2.

Immense. A jarðormur is 30 hexes long and 2 hexes wide on a battlemap. It can rear out of reach, slam, overrun, or trample whole squads at a time. It knows this, and takes advantage!

Really Big Sneaky Snake. Jarðormur get *really* big: The example provided is SM +7 (and the art shows still larger). Detecting one requires winning a Quick Contest of *Per-based Vision* vs the ormur's **Stealth**, which benefits from **Chameleon** and **Silence**, but is penalized by **Size Modifier**. Spotting one that wants to hide is a Quick Contest of the delver's *Per-based Vision* vs **Stealth-12** if it's moving, or **Stealth-17** if it's not! For hearing, the rumble of its passage is a Quick Contest of *Per-based Hearing* vs **Stealth-15** if it's moving, **Stealth-18** if stationary. Note **Hearing** rolls use a different penalty scale for distance than **Vision** rolls (*Hearing, EXPLOITS, P. 9*).

Jarðorma are titanic serpents who spend most of their time slumbering far from settled lands. They move quietly through nature despite their immense bulk, disturbing no vegetation or terrain in their wake. They blend in with the surroundings, and earth and small plants cover them rapidly while motionless. A jarðormur's scale color and pattern adapts to its chosen habitat. Brown and green in forests and grassy plains, gray and stony in the mountains, sandy brown in deserts, snow white in arctic environments. They favor temperate forests and hills, but can be found anywhere except in the open sea.

Jarðorma do not procreate. When the World Worm's dreams touch a sleeping snake, it may continue to slumber for *decades*. The dreams spark intelligence in the snake and cause it to grow to massive size under the earth. It awakens as a jarðormur and can live for thousands of years.

While they have no need for sustenance, jarðorma sometimes devour unlucky prey due to old habits and the pleasure of feasting. Most ignore other intelligent life, content to spend their time lazing under the sun. Reactions of individual jarðorma towards interlopers range across the spectrum. A few enrage at the slightest disturbance, some completely ignore anything that doesn't injure them, while others are inquisitive and like to converse. Such jarðorma

JARÐORMUR

Mundane (Vermiform)

TACTICS

- Bulldozer
- Nowhere to Hide
- Self-Preservation

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Jörmungandr's Tears. Jarðorma have the most potent venom known to mortals: a vicious **cyclic pain toxin**. The victim must roll vs **HT-6** or suffer **4d toxic damage** and **agony**. Success inflicts **2d toxic damage** and **terrible pain**, while critical success results in **1d toxic damage** and “only” **moderate pain**. The victim suffers a **heart attack** if the roll is critically failed. The **HT-6** roll is repeated *every 10 seconds for six cycles*. If toxic damage exceeds the victim’s HP, they suffer **blindness** as if the eyes were crippled, including *Duration of Crippling* (*EXPLOITS, p. 61*). **Agony** subsides after the cycles are over, but the pain level of the final cycle persists until the toxic damage heals.

Ormur Smash! The creature doesn’t need to go around cover: It goes through it! The ormur simply smashes right through any cover that isn’t a cave or a deep hole in the ground. Treat all cover and obstacles as a **Minor Obstruction in Hex** (*Obstructions, EXPLOITS, p. 35*) at +1 movement point per hex obliterated as it makes delver pancakes.

Painful Retribution. Any cutting, impaling, or piercing damage to the jarðormur causes a spray of **sensitizing poison** (gain **Low Pain Threshold** for 1d hours, duration halved with a successful **HT-3** roll) to fill a 4-yard radius in a cloud which persists for 10 seconds. If the damage penetrates DR and causes actual injury, the cloud is composed of **Jörmungandr's Tears** instead.

Ramming Speed. When this creature charges, get out of the way. When making a **Slam** attack or **Shield Rush** (*EXPLOITS, p. 40*), always look up their full **Move** score (as modified by encumbrance, injury, fatigue, or other factors) on the **Linear Measurement** column of the *Size And Speed/Range Table* instead of the distance they moved this turn.

Swallow Whole. Can swallow anything **SM +3** or smaller. Swallowed creatures must defeat **Control DR 30** or cut their way out inflicting cutting injury in excess of 170 HP. They also suffer the effects of **Jörmungandr's Tears** until they escape, after which they still suffer the full minute duration of the toxin.

ST 150

DX 10

K 9

HT 15

HP 150

WILL 15

PER 11

FP 15

Control Thresholds

$\geq 0.1 \times \text{CM}$	$\geq 1/2 \times \text{CM}$	$\geq \text{CM}$	$\geq 1.5 \times \text{CM}$	$\geq 2 \times \text{CM}$	DMG	16d/18d
15	76	152	228	304	BASIC LIFT	4,500

Parry	Dodge	Block	DR	SPEED	6.25
—	10	—	20	MOVE	7/14

ATTACKS

- **Bite (14):** 4d×5 impaling and control plus **Jörmungandr's Tears** follow-up. Reach C-11.
- **Slam or Overrun (14):** 8d×4 crushing (Move 4) or 6d×6 crushing (Move 7) or 9d×5 crushing (Move 14).
- **Trample:** 8d crushing.

SKILLS

- Brawling-14
- Stealth-12
- Sumo Wrestling-14
- Swimming-15

TRAITS

- Acute Vibration Sense 4
- Amphibious
- Chameleon 7
- Combat Reflexes
- Constriction Attack
- Doesn't Eat or Drink
- Enhanced Move
- Extra Attack 1
- High Pain Threshold
- Immense
- Immunity to Poison
- Immunity to Stun
- Infravision
- Nictitating Membrane 10
- Ramming Speed
- Sense of Duty (Nature)
- Silence 3
- Slippery
- Subsonic Hearing
- Swallow Whole
- Temperature Tolerance (Heat and Cold) 10
- Terrain Adaptation (All)
- Vermiform
- Vibration Sense (Air)



MYRKRA ORMUR

When the World Nightmare seeps into *Midgard*, it sometimes infuses the largest snake in the area. The animal grows, shadows gather around it, and its intellect awakens. It starts avoiding sunlight but otherwise maintains normal activity during this process. It takes about a year for the fledgling myrkra ormur to reach its full size, though some continue to slowly grow for the rest of their lives. A grown myrkra ormur needs to feed only several times a year—though those feedings consume a *lot* of prey due to its sheer size. It gleefully devours any interlopers that aggravate it.

Myrkra orma generally do not associate with each other. They are always surrounded by other snakes instead, and act as their caretakers. In fact, snakes of various kinds and sizes, including swarms of smaller ones, periodically emerge from the shadowy coils of a myrkra ormur! Woe betide the hapless delver who hurts members of a myrkra ormur's slithering family. The ormur rages and attacks the offender immediately. Contrary to their sinister appearance, these orma are otherwise not inherently ill-disposed. Most will gladly chat, negotiate, or bargain with delvers as long as they're not provoked. Harming their children, bringing light brighter than a torch, or discussing the sun in their presence all provide sufficient provocation. Experiencing pleasant dreams within several hundred yards of the ormur will do it as well. The serpent uncannily pinpoints a dreaming delver's location, proceeding at once in their direction, seemingly gravely offended. Dreamless nights or suffering nightmares is fine.

Myrkra orma are in fact very interested in nightmares people have experienced and love to discuss them at length. This is a good way to distract them; it gives +3 to any **Diplomacy** or **Public Speaking** rolls made for that purpose. **Fast-Talk** doesn't benefit because the discussion has to be lengthy. While doing so, the myrkra ormur will reveal a few tidbits about the World Worm and its restless sleep: it heralds the end of the world and everything is going to fall apart, it's an exciting process everyone should look forward to ... sadly, not much better than the ramblings of a fanatic, but delivered in quite a composed manner. Especially for a 50-foot-long venomous shadow serpent.

CREATURES OF SHADOW

All myrkra-infused creatures have the following abilities:

Backstabber. Myrkra serpents prefer to ambush their prey, but can use **Backstabbing** any number of times during combat if the ambush fails. They must take a Move maneuver and make a **Stealth** roll. Failure means it gets spotted, but success means it "vanishes" for as many turns as it likes. It can emerge to attack up to Move yards per turn of absence from the location where it vanished, provided it can reach the destination normally. This includes making any appropriate rolls for *Dungeon Parkour (EXPLOITS, p. 20)* if needed.

In There Somewhere. The darkness field stands out as a blot on the surroundings, which can give away the creature's presence in proper conditions. Attacking "somewhere in the darkness field" is at -6 if you can see the whole field; apply the Size Modifier of the target normally. It's still easier to hit a big field of darkness than a small one.

Murky Emanation. A myrkra-serpent is perpetually engulfed in a field of darkness. This imposes a darkness penalty in a radius equal to the **Linear Measurement** for the creature's size modifier, and half that penalty out to *triple* that distance (similar to an area-effect light source, *EXPLOITS, p. 19*, but for darkness instead). The darkness penalties apply to attack and Vision rolls directed at the shadow serpent (*Visibility, EXPLOITS, p. 36*). The penalty is not cumulative with ambient darkness—use the worst one. Only direct sunlight negates the field, including the **Sunlight** spell (*SPELLS, p. 48*) in its direct area of illumination. Shadow serpents move out of such light and attack the caster as first order of business.

Really Darkvision. Shadow serpents are immune to the effects of their own darkness field; they also have "regular" **Darkvision**.

MYRKRA-INFUSED

Most commonly attained through association with a myrkra ormur or from [Nightmare corruption](#), some creatures can become permeated with the stuff of Nightmare. Similar to the “blessings” of the *couatl*, this imbues the accursed with traits and abilities derived from the stuff of Nightmare.

Lesser Infusion. Darkness perpetually engulfs the subject, giving a **Murky Emanation** with a **-3 darkness penalty**. This enables **Backstabber**, **In There Somewhere**, and **Vanish** (see above). The subject may **backstab** only at the beginning of combat. Note that in populated areas, the murky emanation is equivalent to **Unnatural Features**: You’re easier to spot and track if the ambient lighting is greater than your projected darkness penalty. It may also lead to **Social Stigma (Nightmare Infused)**!

Greater Infusion. The **Murky Emanation** darkness penalty increases to **-4**. The creature can use **Backstabbing** during combat any number of times. Finally, the creature gains **Dark Vision**, as well as **Blackout-15** and **Darkness-15**.



JUVENILE SHADOW SERPENTS

This is a myrkra ormur who hasn’t yet grown to full size. It is also dumber but quicker and more agile than its “adult” form. A juvenile myrkra ormur is not always accompanied by other serpents, and hasn’t yet developed its special connections with them. It may converse with delvers in a rudimentary fashion, but it needs a really good reason not to simply ambush them. The novelty factor wears off quickly, and the delvers can offer it little of value.

Attributes: ST 25/HP 30, DX 14, IQ 8, HT 13. SM +3. Will 9, Per 10, Damage 2d+2/5d-1. DR 4.

Basic Speed: 8.00, Move 8/12, Basic Lift 125. Dodge-12.

Skills: Brawling-16, Climbing-16, Intimidation-12. Stealth-20, Swimming-12, Tracking-12

Traits: Chameleon 3; Nictitating Membrane 1; Swallow Whole (SM +1, Control DR 6, 36 HP injury to escape); Vermiform.

ATTACKS

• **Bite (16):** 2d+3 impaling plus **Shadow Toxin** follow-up. Reach C-2.

• **Poison Spit (16):** Soaks the target in **Shadow Toxin**, DR does not protect. Range 20. Acc 1.

• **Overrun (16):** 2d+2 crushing or 2d+10 crushing (Move 8) or 2d+12 crushing (Move 12)

• **Tail Swipe (16):** 2d+3 crushing, double knockback. Reach C-2. Attacks as 1-yard-wide jet attack between ormur and target. Counts as weapon, not as body part.

MYRKRA ÓRMUR

Mundane (Vermiform)

Myrkra orma are immense shadowy serpents that dwell in dark, remote areas. A pair of glowing red eyes is their most striking feature. The rest of their forms are only vaguely seen under the shadowy wisps covering them. These orma prefer environments thick with vegetation such as dense forests or rainforests. They love nesting among ruins in such areas, but are not above lairing underground either. Their habitat is always protected from direct sunlight, which they strongly disdain.

TACTICS

- ❖ Bulldozer
- ❖ Cunning
- ❖ Death from Shadows
- ❖ Never Just One (So Many Snakes)
- ❖ Primary Target (Spellcaster with Sunlight)
- ❖ Self-Preservation

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Brood Mother. While some creatures produce snakes when struck once or twice, the myrkra ormur *never* runs out of progeny. *Each time* a cutting, impaling or piercing attack penetrates a living myrkra ormur's DR, snakes emerges from the wound! Roll 1d with the following results ... or the GM can just choose a lovely bonus prize:

- 1 – 4 fórn snakes
- 2 – Amphisbaena
- 3 – Battering ramsnake
- 4 – Frost snake (*MONSTERS, P. 28*)
- 5 – Giant constrictor (*MONSTERS, P. 31*)
- 6 – Giant viper (*MONSTERS, P. 31*)

Close Family. Snakes and the ormur may pass through each other's hexes without incurring extra movement point cost as per *EXPLOITS, P. 34*. It also has **Higher Purpose 1** so long as there's at least one snake nearby.

Shadow Toxin. A myrkra ormur's venom is a **fear toxin** that inflicts **2d toxic** damage. The Fright Check and any self-control rolls are all at -2. If any of these rolls fail by 5 or more, the victim additionally suffers from **blindness**. The blindness can be removed by either **Remove Curse** (other spells won't work) or goes away naturally with a success on a *daily* roll vs HT.

Swallow Whole. Can swallow anything SM +1 or smaller. Swallowed creatures must defeat **Control DR 15** or cut their way out with cutting injury in excess of 83 HP. See *Swallow Whole (NORÐLOND BESTIARY, P. 7)* for more information.

ST 35

DX 12

K 10

HT 14

HP 70

WILL 12

PER 14

FP 14

Control Thresholds

≥0.1×CM ≥1/2×CM ≥CM ≥1.5×CM ≥2×CM

4

18

35

53

70

D_{MG} 4d-1/6d+1

BASIC LIFT 245

Defenses

Parry

Dodge

Block

SPEED 7.00

—

11

—

8

MOVE 8/16

ATTACKS

- ❖ **Bite (16):** 4d+2 impaling and control plus **Shadow Toxin** follow-up. Reach C-5.
- ❖ **Poison Spit (16):** soaks the target in **Shadow Toxin**, DR does not protect. Range 30. Acc 1.
- ❖ **Overrun (16):** 4d+1 crushing; 4d+17 crushing (Move 8) or 4d+25 crushing (Move 16)
- ❖ **Tail Swipe (16):** 4d+2 crushing, *triple* knockback. Reach C-5. Attacks as 2-yard-wide jet attack between ormur and target. Treat as a weapon, not as body part.
- ❖ **Trample (16):** 4d+3 crushing. Automatically hits for half damage on **overrun** that knocks down the target.

SKILLS

- ❖ Brawling-16
- ❖ Climbing-16
- ❖ Intimidation-14

- ❖ Stealth-18
- ❖ Swimming-14
- ❖ Tracking-14

TRAITS

- ❖ Amphibious
- ❖ Catfall
- ❖ Chameleon 5
- ❖ Cold-Blooded
- ❖ Combat Reflexes
- ❖ Constriction Attack
- ❖ Dark Vision
- ❖ Enhanced Move
- ❖ Extra Attack 1
- ❖ Higher Purpose 1 (Protect All Snakes)
- ❖ Immunity to Poison
- ❖ Nictitating Membrane 8
- ❖ Serpent's Maw
- ❖ Slippery
- ❖ Subsonic Hearing
- ❖ Swallow Whole
- ❖ Temperature Tolerance (Heat and Cold) 2
- ❖ Terrain Adaptation (All)
- ❖ Unfazeable
- ❖ Venom Spitter
- ❖ Vermiform
- ❖ Vibration Sense (All)

MYRKRA PYTHON

Animal, Dire (Vermiform)

This is a giant constrictor infused with the darkness of Nightmare. Its origins are the same as that of a [myrkra viper](#).

Even more so than many other animals that employ the [Turret Defense](#) tactic, the myrkra python grapples an initial victim to helplessness, and then bites others. It crushes the initial victim only if there is nobody else threatening it, or to add insult to containment and injury before running away.

TACTICS

- ⌚ Ambusher (Higher Ground)
- ⌚ Death from Shadows
- ⌚ Turret Defense

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Brood Host. When the creature is injured by cutting, impaling or piercing damage, a giant viper ([NORDLOND BESTIARY, p. 31](#)) bursts forth from the wound and joins combat. This can happen twice.

Lesser Myrkra Infusion. The python has the powers and abilities granted by the [lesser infusion](#). Includes **Murky Emanation** with a -3 darkness penalty, **Backstabber**, **In There Somewhere**, and **Vanish**.

Swallow Whole. Can swallow anything SM 0 or smaller thanks to **Serpent's Maw**. Swallowed creatures must defeat **Control DR 5** or cut their way out with cutting injury in excess of 28 HP. See [Swallow Whole](#) ([NORDLOND BESTIARY, p. 7](#)) for more information.

TRAITS

- ⌚ Catfall
- ⌚ Cold-Blooded
- ⌚ Constriction Attack
- ⌚ Dark Vision
- ⌚ Nictitating Membrane 3
- ⌚ Serpent's Maw
- ⌚ Subsonic Hearing
- ⌚ Vermiform
- ⌚ Wild Animal

SKILLS

- ⌚ Climbing-18
- ⌚ Stealth-15
- ⌚ Wrestling-16

ST 25

DX 14

K 4

HT 12

HP 25

WILL 12

PER 11

FP 12

Control Thresholds

≥0.1×CM ≥1/2×CM ≥CM ≥1.5×CM ≥2×CM

3 14 27 41 54

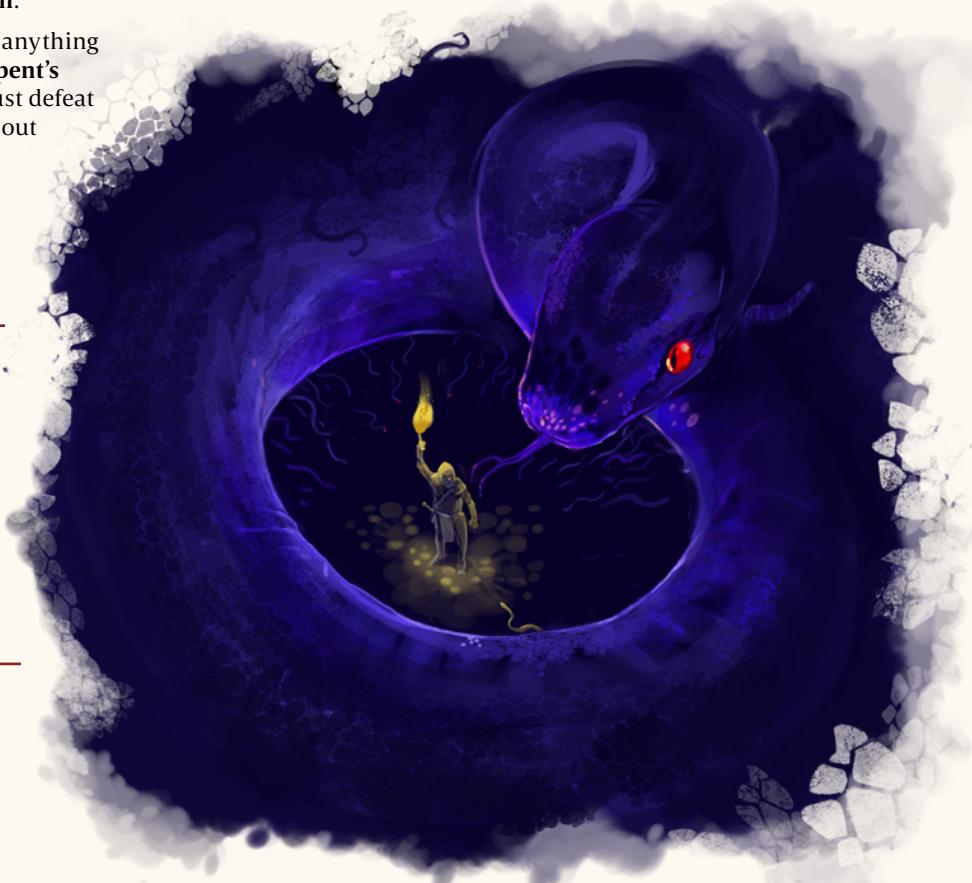
DMG 2d+2/5d-1

BASIC LIFT 125

Defenses				SPEED	6.00
Parry	Dodge	Block	DR		
—	9	—	3	MOVE	6

ATTACKS

- ⌚ Bite (14): 2d+1 impaling. Reach C, 1.
- ⌚ Grapple (16): 3d+2 control. Reach C, 1.



MYRKRA VIPER

Animal, Dire (Vermiform)

This is a giant viper infused with the darkness of Nightmare. It may be because of proximity to a myrkra ormur, a “wild” Nightmare mutation, and it may even be a very recently infused myrkra ormur.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Greater Myrkra Infusion. has the powers and abilities granted by the lesser infusion. Includes **Murky Emanation** with a **-4** darkness penalty, **Backstabber**, **In There Somewhere**, **Vanish**, **Darkvision**, **Blackout-15** and **Darkness-15**.

Swallow Whole. Can swallow anything SM -1 or smaller thanks to **Serpent's Maw**. Swallowed creatures must defeat Control DR 3 or cut their way out with cutting injury in excess of 18 HP. See *Swallow Whole, NORDLOND BESTIARY, p. 7* for more information.

Venomous Death Throes. Explodes into a 2-yard toxic cloud when defeated. Deals **2d toxic** damage, halved with a HT-2 roll. Those not experienced with this creature may not dodge to step out of the area unless they have **Danger Sense**.

Viper Venom. Take 2d toxic damage and make a HT-2 roll. Failure induces **nausea**. Roll separately at HT-2 for **severe pain**; critical failure results in **coma**. Make a HT roll every week after the bite; success ends both nausea and pain.

TRAITS

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| ➊ Cold-Blooded | ➋ Silence 3 |
| ➋ Combat Reflexes | ➋ Striking ST 3 |
| ➋ Dark Vision | ➋ Subsonic Hearing |
| ➋ Nictitating Membrane 2 | ➋ Venom Spitter |
| ➋ Resistant to Poison 3 | ➋ Vermiform |
| ➋ Serpent's Maw | ➋ Wild Animal |

ST 15 DX 14 IQ 3 HT 12

HP 15 WILL 11 PER 11 FP 12

Control Thresholds

≥0.1×CM	≥1/2×CM	≥CM	≥1.5×CM	≥2×CM	D _{MG} 1d+1/2d+1
---------	---------	-----	---------	-------	---------------------------

2	8	15	23	30	BASIC LIFT 45
---	---	----	----	----	---------------

Defenses			SPEED 7.00
Parry	Dodge	Block	DR
—	11	—	2
MOVE 7			

ATTACKS

➊ Bite (16): 1d+2 impaling plus **Viper Venom** follow-up. Reach C, 1. Treat as weapon, not as body part.

SKILLS

➊ Brawling-16 ➋ Stealth-15

TACTICS

➋ Death from Shadows



SNÁKAMAÐR

Snákamaðr or serpent-men are a race of beast-folk (very) distantly related to the World Worm. Though mostly humanoid, they possess combinations of snake-like features: scales, heads, and tails (with or without legs). Some could even be mistaken for humans were it not for their forked tongues, vertically slitted pupils, and partial scale coverage. Similarly to dragon-blooded, the latter may even interbreed with humans. The more human-like *snákamaðr* bear live young, while the more serpent-like ones lay eggs.

Regardless of exact features, the *snákamaðr* trend thinner and taller than humans of equal mass. Most of the height difference lies in an elongated torso—and neck, in case of serpent-headed ones.

Other races may mistrust the *snákamaðr* due to tales of serpent-men who worship dark gods and perform all kinds of nefarious deeds. This reputation is somewhat of a misunderstanding. It is the *martröðtýndr*, corrupted outcasts from the wider *snákamaðr* society who are responsible for these vile acts.

Snákamaðr settle in seclusion, far from mainstream human civilization. They maintain relationships with neighboring *snákamaðr*, but do not usually seek contact with other races. If approached respectfully, they can form amicable relations, including trade.

They don't mind interlopers in their territory as long as they do not attempt to settle down or exploit the wilderness. The *snákamaðr* issue a polite but very stern warning to such outsiders to stop their activities and leave. If they do not, the *snákamaðr* gather allies from neighboring settlements and drive off the intruders.

An individual *snákamaðr* settlement consists of *snákamaðr* with (mostly) a shared physiology, as they tend to have similar needs. Each is a clan of related individuals, and the *snákamaðr* form similar interpersonal relationships to humans. As such, they structure the sort of extended family relationships that would be familiar to most Norðland human societies. Those who bear live young form families indistinguishable from human ones; those who lay eggs do it differently.

Females of such *snákamaðr* within a clan are fertile during the same times, and deposit their eggs at a communal hatchery. It is central to the settlement and well guarded at all times. Once the eggs hatch, the entire clan raises the children together. Egg-laying *snákamaðr* usually do not know who their biological parents are; all members of a clan are instead each other's "aunt," "uncle," "niece," "nephew," and other analogs.

Mated pairs still form small individual households. Young adults (usually from the same hatching) form cohabitation arrangements in groups of about half a dozen until they find mates. The rare visiting outsider from a civilized

center of learning would comment that these households suspiciously resemble scholastic boarding-school *bræðralag*; in Morevel they are called "frat houses."

Snákamaðr living outside of their clan structures are most often young adults curious about the wider world—or delvers. If they settle in lands belonging to other races, it's as individual families at most. A larger gathering that doesn't fit into traditional clans carves their own village out of the ample wilderness. While extremely rare, such isolated settlements contribute to misconceptions about these beast-folk.

Elders govern *snákamaðr* society, led by a chief who is held to be the wisest member of a clan: usually a druid, wizard or priest. When one chief dies, once burial rites are complete, the elders enter a shared dream to determine the successor. When they awaken, they declare the new chief who leads the clan. While they most frequently choose from among the council of elders, sometimes they elevate a younger member of the clan. Disputing the choice is a cultural taboo, as the *snákamaðr* are confident the World Worm has shown them the way.

The *snákamaðr* acknowledge and respect the *Aesir* for keeping the world safe, but worship the World Worm as their progenitor and the literal foundation of the world: They look upon defiling nature as the same as defiling their deity.

Dreams are an important element of *snákamaðr* faith, used to commune with their god, seek guidance and prophecy, and for healing trances. Conversely, nightmares are taboo, representing an infection attacking the World Worm in its slumber. They disrupt its healing and corrupt the Worm's children. *Snákamaðr* clans execute members exhibiting signs of nightmare corruption. *Snákamaðr* become hostile to a previously welcome outsider exhibiting signs of nightmares. Bringing them up in conversation triggers the same response. The best such a visitor can expect is to defuse the situation enough to allow escape. The *snákamaðr* are not as zealous in pursuing outsiders as they are with their own.

Nightmares are universally considered signs of Nightmare Corruption among the *snákamaðr*; they are aware that for other species, sometimes a bad dream is just a bad dream—except when it's not.

The *snákamaðr* revere *couatl* as divine emissaries of the World Worm, following their orders unquestioningly. They revere *jarðorma* as avatars of their deity. They go to war against any *martröðtýndr*, *myrkra orma* or *gorgons* (they are immune to the gorgon's gaze) discovered in or near their territory.

SNÁKAMAÐR HUNTER

Mundane

This is a well-trained snákamaðr hunter and clan defender. The name encompasses both peacetime and warfare, as the hunters' role is to keep the clan well fed; in battle they make irksome and effective light fighters.

TACTICS

Sniper. The hunter prefers to initiate fights with surprise from higher ground, where she can take pot shots with her bow. She envenoms her arrows with her own poison.

Skirmisher. When engaging in melee, the hunter attempts to hold the enemy at reach 2 by using her spear in two hands. If she can't, she is not afraid to enter close combat, where she grapples her opponent before delivering a venomous bite.

EQUIPMENT

Gear includes a **regular bow**, a **heavy hip quiver** with 20 bodkin and 10 **regular arrows**, a **spear**, and a suit of **light leather armor**. No encumbrance.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Gaze Resistant. All snákamaðr are *immune* to the deleterious effects of the gorgon's gaze. Other gaze or paralytic attacks may affect them normally.

TRAITS

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| ⬧ Cold-Blooded | ⬧ Nictitating Membrane 1 |
| ⬧ Envenom Weapons | ⬧ Resistant to Poison 5 |
| ⬧ Flexibility | ⬧ Subsonic Hearing |
| ⬧ Infravision | |

SKILLS

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| ⬧ Bow-13 | ⬧ Spear-13 |
| ⬧ Brawling-14 | ⬧ Stealth-13 |
| ⬧ Climbing-14 | ⬧ Survival-12 |
| ⬧ Fast-Draw (Arrow)-12 | ⬧ Tracking-13 |
| ⬧ Hiking-12 | ⬧ Wrestling-13 |
| ⬧ Observation-12 | |

ST 12

DX 12

K 10

HT 11

HP 12 WILL 10 PER 12 FP 11

SM 0

≥0.1×CM ≥1/2×CM ≥CM ≥1.5×CM ≥2×CM

1 7 13 20 26

D_{MG} 1d-1/1d+2

BASIC LIFT 29

DEFENSES

Parry	Dodge	Block	DR	SPEED	6.00
9	9	—	2	MOVE	6

ATTACKS

- ⬧ **Bite (14):** 1d-1 impaling plus 2d toxic follow-up. Reach C.
- ⬧ **Claw (14):** 1d-1 cutting. Reach C.
- ⬧ **Grapple (13):** 1d+1 control. Reach C.
- ⬧ **Regular Bow (13):** 1d impaling + 2d toxic follow-up or 1d (2) piercing + 2d toxic follow-up. Range 180/240. Acc 2, Shots 1 (2); Bulk -7.
- ⬧ **Spear (13):** 1d+1 impaling. Reach 1*.
- ⬧ **Two-Handed Spear (13):** 1d+2 impaling. Reach 1, 2*.



MATSYADAS

SNÁKAMAÐR WARRIOR

Mundane

This represents a seasoned *snákamaðr* clan warrior. It is one of the *snákamaðr* with a serpentine lower body and tail instead of legs.

TACTICS

Melee. The warrior initiates battle by throwing an axe or two at the opposition before switching to his melee weapon.

Not-so-Close Combat. The warrior can grapple with his SM +1 tail at Reach 1 while maintaining the use of his weapons.

EQUIPMENT

Gear includes two **throwing axes** and either a **falchion** and a **medium buckler** or a **dwarven dueling glaive**. He wears a suit of **scale armor** which puts him at light encumbrance*. His tail is covered with an armored "curtain." See [Armor for Slithering Humanoids](#) for details.

*Move includes encumbrance.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Gaze Resistant. All *snákamaðr* are *immune* to the deleterious effects of the gorgon's gaze. Other gaze or paralytic attacks may affect them normally.

Vermitaur. Lower body and tail are SM +1 and trail in a hex behind the rest of the creature. They can be targeted at no penalty but there are no **vitals** there. An armored curtain similar to horse barding covers that part of the body. Properly timing an attack targeted underneath this works as striking torso chinks at half the usual penalty.

TRAITS

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| • Catfall | • Lifting ST 3 |
| • Cold-Blooded | • Nictitating Membrane 1 |
| • Combat Reflexes | • Resistant to Poison 5 |
| • Constriction Attack | • Slithering Humanoid |
| • Flexibility | • Subsonic Hearing |
| • Infravision | |

SKILLS

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| • Brawling-13 | • Shortsword-14 |
| • Climbing-12* | • Stealth-9* |
| • Intimidation-12 | • Thrown Weapon (Axe)-14 |
| • Polearm-14 | • Wrestling-14 |
| • Shield (Buckler)-14 | |

ST 15

DX 11

K 10

HT 12

HP 15 WILL 10 PER 10

FP 12

Control Thresholds

$\geq 0.1 \times CM$	$\geq 1/2 \times CM$	$\geq CM$	$\geq 1.5 \times CM$	$\geq 2 \times CM$	DMG
2	10	20	30	40	$1d+1/2d+1$

SM 0

Parry	Dodge	Block	DR	SPEED	5.75
11+2	8*+2	11+2	5/4	MOVE	4*

BASIC LIFT 65

Defenses

Parry	Dodge	Block	DR	SPEED	5.75
11+2	8*+2	11+2	5/4	MOVE	4*

ATTACKS

- **Bite (13):** 1d+1 impaling plus 1d toxic follow-up. Reach C.
- **Claw (13):** 1d+1 cutting. Reach C.
- **Dueling Glaive (14):** 2d+3 cutting or 1d+4 impaling. Reach 1, 2*.
- **Grapple (14):** 2d+1 control. Reach C, 1.
- **Falchion (14):** 2d+2 cutting or 1d-1 impaling. Reach 1.
- **Throwing Axe (14):** 2d+3 cutting. Range 15/22. Acc 2, Shots T(1), Bulk -3.



MARTRÖÐTÝNDR

Lurking in dark corners of the earth, *martröðtýndr* are a corrupt offshoot of snákamaðr responsible for most of the serpent-folk's bad rap, owing to their alleged habit of abducting people to eat or sacrifice at the altars of their dark gods. The truth is *slightly* more complex.

Snákamaðr suffering from nightmares have a chance of visiting the World Worm's fevered dreams of doom as they sleep. The experience is wracking as they share in the torment. Momentary glimpses and faint voices offer a way out to the victim ... if only they would reach out, and help unravel the World Worm's slumber, ending everything quickly and painlessly. Not all victims accept. The bout of nightmares eventually concludes, and there is no rule to when or if the same event will reoccur. Those who accept continue to suffer the same nightmares every night for the rest of their lives. They compel the newly born martröðtýndr to pull at the threads of firmament, and bring about the end of the world.

Places where the World Nightmare seeps into *Midgard* draw martröðtýndr as moths to the flame. There they construct alien looking temples in which they perform profane rituals. Human sacrifice is an important element, so the martröðtýndr must emerge from their lairs to hunt for victims. They often ally with [myrkra orma](#) or [gorgons](#): the former just enjoy the company, while the latter are usually in charge. They also join into cults with members of humanoid races, but some martröðtýndr see these warm-bloods as presumptuous wannabees who need to be taught a harsh lesson by their superiors.

Within their temples, martröðtýndr form a mockery of snákamaðr society. They leave their eggs in mud pits, and do not care for them; infants must fend for themselves from the moment they hatch. The adults consider them to be little more than annoying pets until they reach adolescence.

All martröðtýndr have the **Intolerance (All other religions)**, **Obsession (End the World Worm's slumber, and unravel the world)** (12), and **Odious Racial Habit (Eats other sapients, -3 reactions)** disadvantages. Many will eat each other after a lethal disagreement! **Fanaticism [-15]** is common, but not among leaders. **Bloodlust** is discouraged because they need live captives for sacrifices.

Martröðtýndr have an affinity for darkness thanks to their Nightmare connection. They replace their racial **Infravision** with **Dark Vision**.

MARTRÖÐTÝNDR WARRIOR

Scouts, and shock troopers make the bulk of martröðtýndr armed forces. Use the [snákamaðr hunter](#) for the former, and [snákamaðr warrior](#) for the latter.

NIGHTMARE SNAKE-PRIESTS

A high priest, usually the most powerful spellcaster in the group, leads each congregation. Succession is violent but not treacherous. If an upstart is confident they can supplant the current high priest, they issue a challenge which may not be refused. The challenger, and the incumbent perform a ritual in which they visit a shared nightmare where they battle to death. The loser does not wake up, and the congregation devours them.

The snake-priests have a special serpent-themed spell that is passed from the high priest to a chosen successor. This terrible curse turns the victim's own flesh into a venomous snake, which then proceeds to inflict still more injury until it is slain.

SNEKROBOLT

Missile

Shoots a bolt of black necrotic energy engulfed in green vapors. It has Acc 2, 1/2D 50, Max 100. Roll **Innate Attack (Projectile)** to hit. **DR** does not protect against this spell!

The bolt rips out some of the target's flesh, and mutates it into a snake-like elder thing with **ST**, and **HP** equal to inflicted injury. It attacks the victim once per turn starting from the caster's next turn. It does **thrust+2 impaling** damage with the same amount of toxic follow-up, using the caster's spell level as skill. To determine its SM, look up its **ST** as yards in the Linear Measurement column of the *Size, and Speed/Range Table (EXPLOITS, p. 98)*, and use the corresponding value in the Size column reduced by 4. If it falls between values, use the lower one. It has no **DR**, and a **Dodge** of 8.

The creature starts on the victim, bursting through their armor if initial injury caused a **major wound**. This halves **DR** on the targeted location until repaired. If initial injury did not cause a **major wound**, the creature starts under the armor. To attack it in this case, the victim must first hastily doff the armor on the affected hit location. This halves **DR** until donned again, and requires a Ready maneuver, and a successful **DX** roll. While the creature is on the victim, they are considered to be in close combat. The victim can shake the snake off by a successful grappling attack against it, regardless of control rolled. The snake can in turn parry this using its attack skill, but otherwise it can only dodge.

Cost: Any amount up to twice your level of spellcasting talent per second, for three seconds. The bolt does **1d-2 toxic damage** for every two energy points.

Time to cast: 1 to 3 seconds.

MARTRÖÐTÝNDR Assassin

Mundane

Martröðtýndr dispatch assassins like these when they need someone eliminated without drawing attention, or when the target is beyond the reach of a raiding party. They always have physiology with few snake-like features so they can blend into humanoid population. They present themselves as dragon-blooded, which requires no disguise at all as long as they're not confronted by an actual one. They are adept at gathering information, and tracking their quarry, and can slip unnoticed into well-guarded locations.

Surprise! The assassin does not participate in stand-up fights. They strike from surprise, and use *Backstabbing* (*EXPLOITS, P. 57*), hoping to fell their mark in a single bite at the least armored hit location. If that doesn't work, they retreat to concealment, and try again using their *Vanish* ability.

Cautious. The assassin uses envenomed throwing daggers if closing into melee seems too risky.

EQUIPMENT

Gear includes four balanced, fine large throwing knives, a heavy cloak, and light cloth body armor, gloves, trousers, and boots. No encumbrance.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Vanish. The assassin does not suffer the -5 base penalty to hide at the start of a fight as part of *Backstabbing* (*EXPLOITS, P. 67*). They use it as a last resort anyway, preferring to set up ambushes instead. They can use *Backstabbing* during combat any number of times by taking a Move maneuver to reach cover or concealment where no enemies can see them, and making a *Stealth* roll. Failure means they get spotted, but success means they "vanish" for as many turns as they like. They can emerge to attack up to **Move** yards per turn of absence from the location where they vanished, provided they can reach it normally. This includes making any appropriate rolls for *Dungeon Parkour* (*EXPLOITS, P. 20*) if needed.

TRAITS

- Cold-Blooded
- Combat Reflexes
- Dark Vision
- Enhanced Dodge 1
- Envenom Weapons
- Flexibility
- Honest Face
- Intolerance (All other religions)
- Nictitating Membrane 1

- Obsession (Unravel the world) (12)
- Odious Racial Habit (Eats other sapients, -3 reactions)
- Resistant to Poison 5
- Silence 2
- Striking ST 2
- Subsonic Hearing

ST 11

DX 13

IQ 13

HT 11

HP 11

WILL 13

PER 13

FP 11

Control Thresholds

≥0.1×CM	≥1/2×CM	≥CM	≥1.5×CM	≥2×CM
---------	---------	-----	---------	-------

1	6	11	17	22
---	---	----	----	----

DMG 1d/2d-1

BASIC LIFT 24

Defenses

Parry	Dodge	Block	DR	SPEED 6.00
-------	-------	-------	----	------------

—	11+2	—	2	MOVE 6
---	------	---	---	--------



ATTACKS

• **Bite** (15): 1d impaling plus 3d toxic follow-up. Reach C. Impaling damage increases to 2d when attacking from surprise.

• **Claw** (15): 1d cutting. Reach C.

• **Grapple** (13): 1d-1 control. Reach C.

• **Large Throwing Knife** (16): 1d+1 impaling plus 3d toxic follow-up. Range 13/26. Acc 1, Shots T(1), Bulk -1.

SKILLS

- Acrobatics-14
- Acting-13
- Brawling-15
- Climbing-15
- Disguise-13
- Escape-14
- Fast-Draw (Knife)-14
- Fast-Talk-13
- Holdout-13
- Intimidation-13
- Lockpicking-14
- Observation-13
- Search-13
- Shadowing-13
- Stealth-15 (17 vs Hearing if moving, 19 if motionless)
- Streetwise-13
- Thrown Weapon (Knife)-15
- Tracking-13
- Traps-13
- Urban Survival-12.

MARTRÖÐTÝNDR HIGH PRIEST

Mundane (Vermitaur)

Every high priest is a different beast, with individual capabilities, and ambitions. All are ruthless, utterly evil, and wield considerable resources. This also translates into expensive gear, and at least a magic item or two.

SSSCYLLA

Ssscylla (a popular name among the Martröðtýndr) has recently assumed leadership of her cult by slaying her father, the former high priest, in ritual dream-combat. As the cult's previous chief torturer, and a sadist who picks on her own when there aren't any prisoners around, she isn't very popular. To increase morale, she has increased her congregation's raiding activities. This is what likely brought delvers to her doorstep. Her cult has no humanoid members as she hates warm-bloods with a passion, just like her father before her. Aside from her martröðtýndr minions there are a lot of monstrous snakes in her temple, and possibly other snake-monsters. She would not suffer a gorgon, however, due to their tendency to take cults over for themselves.

TACTICS

Daily Magic. Ssscylla always starts her day by casting **Armor**, and **Shield** spells to provide her with extra 2 points of DR, and DB. Her stat block already includes these as she can maintain them for free. This reduces her spellcasting rolls by 2—her spell list doesn't account for it to help identify casting cost, and time discounts.

Battlefield Control. In battle, Ssscylla leads from the back row, sending her minions to soften up the opposition, and act as meat shields for her. She starts by casting **Blackout** on herself to avoid getting targeted, and also uses it strategically to aid her minions. Both she, and they can see through it. She uses **Stench** if she needs to deny entry into an area. If she witnesses enemies using acid, cold, fire or lightning, she casts the corresponding Resist spell on herself. She uses **Panic** to thin out the herd or **Strike Blind** to disable individual high-value targets.

Sadist. Ssscylla's favorite tactic is throwing a **Snekrobolt** at a blinded victim. If an enemy gets close, she uses **Wither Limb** on them out of pure sadism.

EQUIPMENT

Gear consists of a **fine, balanced knobbed club** which acts as her magic staff (\$170), a **fine, Lighten(-25%)-enchanted, balanced medium shield** (\$2840), a **high holy symbol** representing intertwined snakes, and a suit of **Fortify, Lighten -25% enchanted plate armor** with **serpentcrafted heavy segmented plate** lower body (\$17830). The armor acts as Ssscylla's 25-point power item. Light encumbrance*.



SPECIAL ABILITIES

Death Curse. If slain, Ssscylla utters a vile curse at one of her killers before perishing. The effect is the same as the **Curse** spell afflicting the victim with -2 to all rolls.

Protection from Good. This functions as the **Protection from Evil** spell, but against good entities. It is mostly useful against divine servitors, and Ssscylla has learned it in case she ever has to go against a *couatl*.

Vermittaur. Lower body, and tail are SM +1, and trail in a hex behind the rest of Ssscylla. They can be targeted at no penalty but there are no **vitals** there. The serpentcrafted segmented plate covers this part of the body perfectly.

Snekrobolt Thrower. Ssscylla has mastered throwing the **Snekrobolt** spell, and has the following abilities. She can use a **Concentrate** maneuver to cast, and throw it in a single turn by accepting a -3 penalty on both the casting, and the attack roll. This limits her to one turn worth of charging up the spell. Alternatively, she can cast it normally, and throw it with an Attack or **All-Out Attack** maneuver, and add its Acc bonus without aiming. She can also use a **Move and Attack** to ignore the normal penalties for that maneuver. Finally, she takes no penalty to hit in close combat, and halves all penalties for *pop-up attacks* (**EXPLOITS**, p. 42) or *opportunity fire* (**EXPLOITS**, p. 43).

TRAITS

- Catfall
- Cold-Blooded
- Constriction Attack
- Dark Vision
- Energy Reserve 10
- Flexibility
- Intolerance (All other religions)
- Intolerance (Warm-bloods)
- Lifting Strength 3
- Nictitating Membrane 1

- Obsession (End the world worm's slumber and unravel the world)
- Odious Racial Habit (Eats other sapients)
- Power Investiture 6
- Resistant to Poison 5
- Sadism (12)
- Slithering Humanoid (Vermittaur)
- Subsonic Hearing
- Unfazeable

SKILLS

- Axe/Mace-15
- Diagnosis-12
- Esoteric Medicine-12
- Exorcism-16
- First Aid-14
- Hazardous Materials-13
- Hidden Lore (Elder Things)-15
- Innate Attack (Projectile)-20

- Interrogation-15
- Intimidation-15
- Meditation-14
- Occultism-13
- Religious Ritual-14
- Research-13
- Shield-15
- Surgery-12
- Thaumatology-12
- Theology-14

ST 12

DX 12

K 14

HT 12

HP 12

WILL 16

PER 14

FP 16

Control Thresholds

≥0.1×CM	≥1/2×CM	≥CM	≥1.5×CM	≥2×CM
---------	---------	-----	---------	-------

2

8

15

23

30

DMG 1d-1/1d+2

BASIC LIFT 45

Defenses

Parry	Dodge	Block	DR
-------	-------	-------	----

SPEED 6.00

11+4 8*+4 11+4 10/6 MOVE 4*

ATTACKS

- Bite (12): 1d-2 impaling plus 1d toxic follow-up. Reach C.
- Claw (12): 1d-2 cutting. Reach C.
- Knobbed Club (16): 1d+3 crushing. Reach 1. Used to deliver touch spells.
- Grapple (12): 1d+1 control. Reach C, 1.
- Snekrobolt (20): Variable. Acc 2, Range 50/100, Bulk -2.

SPRILLS

- Affect Spirits-18
- Animal Control (Reptile)-18
- Armor-20
- Astral Vision-17
- Aura-18
- Blackout-18
- Command-18
- Compel Truth-18
- Create Animal-18
- Curse-18
- Detect Magic-18
- Dispel Magic-18
- Major Healing-17
- Mind-Search-17
- Minor Healing-18
- Panic-20
- Protection From Good-18
- Recover Energy-20
- Remove Curse-18
- Resist Acid-18
- Resist Cold-18
- Resist Fire-18
- Resist Lightning-18
- Rider Within-18
- See Invisible-18
- Shield-20
- Snekrobolt-20
- Stench-18
- Stop Bleeding-18
- Strike Blind-20
- Watchdog-18
- Wither Limb-20.

SNÁKAMAÐR AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

Few snákamaðr choose to leave their clans for a life of delving. Common motivations include curiosity about the world and the desire for self-improvement to better protect the clan. A few left their previous lives in the middle of the night after suffering a bout of nightmares. Choice professions are martial artist, thief and wrestler, while none are truly marginal. Those relying on heavy armor, like knight and holy warrior, come closest for snákamaðr with snake lower bodies.

SNÁKAMAÐR (25 POINTS)

Advantages. Fangs [2]; Flexibility [5]; Infravision [10]; Nictitating Membrane 1 [1]; Resistant to Poison 5 [5]; Sharp Claws [5]; Subsonic Hearing [5]; Venomous Bite 1 [4]; Tough Skin 1 [3].

Disadvantages. Cold-Blooded [-5]; Restricted Diet (Meat) [-10].

Features. Forked tongue and vertical pupils. Scales in patterns of various colors, from matte and camouflage to scintillating bright ones. Speaks with a pronounced, hissing "s" unless consciously trained out to better fit in with others. Vestigial tail.

SPECIAL SNÁKAMAÐR TRAITS

Cold-Blooded. The snákamaðr grows sluggish in cold environments. Whenever HT rolls for cold are required as per *EXPLOITS*, p. 70, they have -1 to **Basic Speed** and DX, plus an extra -1 per -1 to those HT rolls extremely cold environments grant. On the flip side, they get +2 on those HT rolls.

Fangs. The snákamaðr's long fangs let them deal **impaling damage** with a bite, instead of **crushing**.

Infravision. The character can see into the infrared spectrum. This works the same as the *Infravision* spell (*SPELLS*, p. 47).

Nictitating Membrane. This gives **Damage Resistance 1** to the character's eyes, as well as +1 to HT rolls concerning the eyes (such as those for acid, blinding powder, flash nageteppe, and spells like **Sandstorm**, **Smoke**, and **Sunbolt**).

Restricted Diet (Meat). The character derives no nutrition from plants or plant-based foods and must eat meat; this doubles the cost of rations and imposes a -4 penalty on any rolls for *Foraging* (*EXPLOITS*, p. 18) using skills other than **Fishing**.

Sharp Claws. Identical to the cat-folk racial ability; see *ADVENTURERS*, p. 43.

Subsonic Hearing. The snákamaðr "hears" vibrations in the ground. This gives +1 to **Tracking** rolls and lets them ignore the **Hush** and **Mage-Stealth** spells. These benefits do not apply against those not moving on the ground or using the **Light Tread** spell or **Light Walk** skill.

Venomous Bite. In addition to its usual damage, the snákamaðr deals an extra **1d toxic damage** with its bite per level of this advantage. This ignores DR completely if the bite itself penetrates it, and it always ignores **Tough Skin**.

Tough Skin. Identical to the barbarian ability of the same name; see *ADVENTURERS*, p. 16.

SNÁKAMAÐR GIFTS

Snákamaðr PCs can replace **Flexibility** with **Double-Jointed** [15], purchase up to 4 levels of **Silence** [5/level] (as the scout ability of the same name, *ADVENTURERS*, p. 35), up to 3 more levels of **Venomous Bite** [4/level], or any of the following advantages and upgrade modules:

Constrictor [24]. Requires **Serpentine**. Your lower body and tail are large and trail behind you. This includes **Constriction Attack** [15] (as the monster ability of the same name, *NORÐLOND BESTIARY*, p. 6), **Vermitaur** [0] and **Lifting Strength 3** [9] (as the barbarian ability of the same name, *ADVENTURERS*, p. 16).

Desert-Adapted [9]. Includes **Temperature Tolerance 4 (Heat)** [4] (as the barbarian ability of the same name, *ADVENTURERS*, p. 16) and **Terrain Adaptation (Sand)** [5] (as the monster ability of the same name, *MONSTERS*, p. 12).

Envenom Weapons [7/level]. The snákamaðr is able to exude its venom and use it to coat weapons. This requires no roll but takes 1 minute per weapon or projectile. Adds the same toxin, and the same potency, as its **Venomous Bite**. The venom is good for one use, and goes inert after 24 hours.

Serpentine [10]. Instead of legs, you have the lower body and tail of a snake. Includes **Catfall** [10] (as the thief ability of the same name, *ADVENTURERS*, p. 39) and **Slithers** [0] (as the monster ability of the same name, *MONSTERS*, p. 14). You need special armor for your tail—see *Armor for Slithering Humanoids*. The **vitals** hit location is in your upper body where normal armor can cover it.

Venomous Bite [4/level]. One level is included with the template; up to four levels may be purchased.

Water-Adapted [25]. Includes **Amphibious** [10] (as the monster ability of the same name, *MONSTERS*, p. 9), **Breath Holding 3** [6], **Slippery 1** [2] (as the monster ability of the same name, *MONSTERS*, p. 12 and *NORÐLOND BESTIARY*, p. 6), **Temperature Tolerance 2 (Cold)** [2] (as the barbarian ability of the same name, *ADVENTURERS*, p. 16) and **Vibration Sense (Water)** [10] (as the monster ability of the same name, *MONSTERS*, p. 12), but removes **Subsonic Hearing**.

WHOMPSNAKE

Animal, Dire (Vermiform)

This boa constrictor sub-type is indistinguishable from a regular *giant constrictor* (*MONSTERS, P. 31*) on first glance. The stark difference only becomes apparent when it springs into action.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Grab and Jump. When using *Springing Attack (Vermiform)* with a grappled victim, ignore the usual rules for *Grab and Go* (*FANTASTIC DUNGEON GRAPPLING, P. 5*) and adjust the whompsnake's Move by its encumbrance.

Leaps and Bounds. The snake leaves turret mode with a *Springing Attack (Vermiform)* to grapple a new victim after throwing the old one, or when it needs to reposition-bringing the current victim along. It may grapple or swing the captive delver during movement without penalty. It never slams, but overruns targets of opportunity in the way.

Meatshield Parry. The whompsnake may parry and block attacks using a grappled foe! The boa must win a Quick Contest of half their ST-based **Wrestling** (Wrestling-17) versus the best ST-based grappling skill of the meat-shield. If they win, the poor sap is pulled into the path of the blow. They can use any legal active defense to fend off the attack, but if it fails, it hits the grappled target.

Puny Delver. Once it grapples a victim up to its **Control Maximum** or higher, the monster can use it as a weapon, swinging the captured creature for **thrust-2 crushing** damage, plus movement-based damage as per a *Slam* (*EXPLOITS, P. 40*) as if the poor delver had run at half the monster's Move. Both the swung delver and the target take damage, exactly as a slam; it's a two-fer!



ST 20

DX 14

K 4

HT 12

HP 26

WILL 12

PER 11

FP 12

SM +2

$\geq 0.1 \times \text{CM}$ $\geq 1/2 \times \text{CM}$ $\geq \text{CM}$ $\geq 1.5 \times \text{CM}$ $\geq 2 \times \text{CM}$

3

16

32

48

64

DMG 2d-1/3d+2

BASIC LIFT 180

DEFENSES

Parry

Dodge

Block

DR

SPEED 6.50

12

10

—

4

MOVE

7

ATTACKS

❖ **Delver Club (16):** 3d+2 crushing. Reach C-2.

❖ **Delver Toss (16):** 3d+2 crushing. Range 10, Acc 0.

❖ **Grapple (16):** 3d+4 control. Reach C, 1.

❖ **Slam or Overrun (16):** 2d-1 crushing or 2d+1 crushing (3 yards) or 2d+3 crushing (5 yards) or 2d+5 crushing (7 yards).

❖ **Trample (16):** 2d+1 crushing. Automatically hits for half damage on overrun that knocks down the target if target is in hex where the whompsnake ends its movement.

TACTICS

❖ Ambusher
(Elevated position)

❖ Bulldozer

❖ Puny Delver

❖ Turret Defense

TRAITS

❖ Catfall

❖ Combat Reflexes

❖ Constriction Attack

❖ Extra Attack 1

❖ High Pain

Threshold

❖ Infravision

❖ Lifting ST 10

❖ Nictitating Membrane 3

❖ Subsonic Hearing

❖ Turret Mode

❖ Wild Animal

❖ Vermiform (Springing)

SKILLS

❖ Brawling-16

❖ Throwing-16

❖ Climbing-18

❖ Wrestling-16

❖ Stealth-15

CULTS AND CORRUPTION

The World Nightmare doesn't only afflict the serpentine children of the World Worm. As its corruption seeps into *Midgard*, members of other races may stumble upon it—or actively seek it out! Embracing its mad vision offers power, but power corrupts (and absolute power is kind of neat). The strong of mind or deeply cunning play with the corruption and harness it for their own ends. The weak-willed go insane.

SERPENT CULTS

When those afflicted by Nightmare spread their corruption, serpent cults are often born. Some congregate in remote locations, erecting corrupted temples adorned with alien monuments. Others hide in plain sight among the populace, their shrines carefully hidden. Their unsettling art and architecture are born of the fevered dreams of their members. Unsurprisingly, the cultists keep a lot of snakes as pets and animal guardians. They share these traits with the marträðtýndr, with whom they often ally.

Most serpent cults genuinely follow Nightmare's bidding to quicken the World Worm's demise. They pull at the strings of firmament from within their places of power and spread the corruption around. Everything else is a means to that end, no matter how complicated. A cult may foment regional strife to induce fear in the populace, but their real goal is to use this fear as fuel for rituals amplifying the World Worm's nightmares, believing *Jörmungandr* desires it.

Others have no interest to end the world, drawing power from Nightmare for their own ambitions: amass wealth and influence, gather arcane power, rule the world ... the usual. All perform rituals requiring human sacrifice and similar defilement of nature and purpose. This grants power and helps avoid corrupting effects. Smart cults are careful to avoid attracting attention. They pace themselves, select victims carefully, hide behind proxies, and avoid risk.

Each cult cultivates a powerful leader at its top who shapes it according to their ambition. Their confidants and lieutenants direct the minions who comprise the bulk of membership. Most of these initiates are unaware of the cults' true agendas—or simply don't care. They join out of greed, vague promises of power, desire to fit in, and similar and frequently banal other reasons.

NORDLONDR BESTIARY contains plenty of NPCs to represent cultists—any of the human ones will do: *Acolyte* (p. 26), *Berserker* (p. 37), *Cultist* (p. 52), *Cultist, Fanatic* (p. 53), *Cultist, Possessed Warlock* (p. 54), *Mage* (p. 138), *Scout* (p. 160) and *Veteran* (p. 184) are all appropriate. Leaders always have gifts imparted by the World Nightmare. Many lieutenants and even some rank and file do as well. See *Nightmare Corruption* for details. Mind that the cultist must hide any obvious changes to avoid drawing suspicion ... or remain confined to the lair.

CULT PERSONALITIES

Cultists don't necessarily make great delvers, but they do make interesting NPCs. The following disadvantage modules are presented in the format of *DELVERS TO GROW*: Each is -25 points and can be roleplayed as a single dominating trait, driven by the behaviors that make up the overall module.

Obviously, many are *far* from heroic.

SERPENT CULTISTS

The following are particularly characteristic of dedicated serpent cultists. These are extreme, and tend to get one in trouble with society, the law, and unamused holy warriors.

ACTUAL CANNIBAL

You prefer a diet of flesh, and the flesh of your own people is the sweetest. You take every opportunity to indulge your hunger, which leaves you on the pudgier side.

DISADVANTAGES: Appearance (Unattractive) [-4]; Gluttony (12) [-5]; Odious Personal Habit (Cannibal) [-15]; Overweight [-1].

DEDICATED APOCALYPTIC

Some true believers focus too much on religious business, but not you! You never lose sight of why you're here and dedicate everything you do to bringing about the end of the world. You have no time for frivolities or pleasantries and sternly brush aside any attempts at such.

DISADVANTAGES: Callous [-5]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Obsession (End the world) (12) [-10].

RITUAL MURDERER

Whatever the reason you joined the cult, you stayed because of the human sacrifices. Killing terrified victims fuels the Nightmare, and you enjoy all parts of the process.

DISADVANTAGES: Bloodlust (15) [-2]; Likes Blood [-1]; Sadism (12) [-15]; Uncontrollable Appetite (Murder) (15) [-7].

TRUE BELIEVER

You're ready to lay down your life for your cult and the World Nightmare. You obey your superiors without question and take any chance you get to spout curses and strike at the followers of the *Aesir*. Your superiors don't let you mingle with non-cultists much, and mutter something about attracting attention when you ask them why.

DISADVANTAGES: Fanaticism (World Nightmare) [-15]; Intolerance (Aesir) [-10].

CULT GROUPIES

The following are appropriate for any kind of cultist. More broadly, these modules depict misguided or unfocused personalities easily channeled. These packages are perfect for useful idiots in nearly any campaign.

CREDOULOUS SOCIALITE

Joining the cult was the best thing you ever did! Everyone takes you into confidence and you do your best to take care of them in return. You don't know what you'd do without your friends.

DISADVANTAGES: Chummy (12) [-5]; Gullibility (12) [-10]; Sense of Duty (Coreligionists) [-10].

ENVIOUS

You can't stand when others have more wealth, influence, or respect than you. You'll do everything to sabotage them and prove yourself more deserving. You never pass an opportunity for more lucre, and power over others is its own reward.

DISADVANTAGES: Greed (12) [-15]; Jealousy [-10].

PARANOID COWARD

Everyone and everything is out to get you. You trust no one, watch their every move, and avoid exposing yourself to danger if you can help it. You're malnourished because food is such a great avenue for poison.

DISADVANTAGES: Cowardice (12) [-10]; Paranoia [-10]; Skinny [-5].

SELF-ABSORBED PROPHET

You spend most of your time either lost in visions or meditating on their meaning. They guide you in important tasks, but you have no time for distractions and trivialities. You tell others about the visions, but they don't seem to appreciate it.

DISADVANTAGES: Absent-Mindedness [-15]; Disciplines of Faith (Mysticism) [-10].



STRANGE ATTRACTOR

You're a magnet for weird creatures, things and occurrences. This isn't directly *harmful*, but it's *inconvenient*. It's always you who's stuck with a useless irremovable cursed item or pestered by flatulence flies. It doesn't help that you always seek companionship and can't resist checking interesting things out.

DISADVANTAGES: Chummy (12) [-5]; Curious (12) [-5]; Weirdness Magnet [-15].

THE ONE BORN EVERY MINUTE

You could never understand people. They always laugh and belittle you, but why? You're perfectly serious and polite. Good thing you meet so many fascinating new friends in the cult.

DISADVANTAGES: Clueless [-10]; Oblivious [-5]; Xenophilia (12) [-10].

TORTURED SOULS

The following modules represent troubled personalities that are often caused by Nightmare corruption—but they don't have to be!

ABUSER

You belittle, scold and push people around any chance you get. You're impossible to please and insist on doing everything your way. You lose your temper and lash out at any conveniently meek outlet for your rage.

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Temper (12) [-10]; Bully (12) [-10]; Stubbornness (12) [-5].

BEREFT OF INHIBITION

You have no inhibition and pursue any attractive person of the right sex ... or any sapient creature *kinda* close to it.

DISADVANTAGES: Lecherousness (12) [-15]; Xenophilia (12) [-10].

BIRD-BRAINED

You're attracted to anything interesting, especially if it's shiny or unfamiliar. You flit from interest to interest, never focusing long on any single one. Only loud noises can ward you off, to which you're very sensitive.

DISADVANTAGES: Curious (12) [-5]; Phobia (Loud Noises) (12) [-10]; Short Attention Span (12) [-10].

DESTROYER

The slightest thing sets you off, and anyone who does so is your enemy, and must die. Preferably in the cleansing fire.

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Temper (12) [-10]; Bloodlust (12) [-10]; Pyromania (12) [-5].



ENDBRINGER

You don't like other people, and you want to see them dead if they cross your path. In fact, it would simply be better to end the world than share it.

DISADVANTAGES: Bloodlust (12) [-10]; Loner (12) [-5]; Obsession (End the world) (12) [-10].

IGNORANT OF VALUE

You do not grasp the concept of material value. You help yourself to any item you need or that piques your interest. You don't mind giving away your wealth—it means nothing to you.

DISADVANTAGES: Compulsive Generosity (12) [-5]; Compulsive Spending (12) [-5]; Kleptomania (12) [-15].

INSATIABLE

You can never get enough of anything. You lust for riches, go on spending sprees, gorge yourself with food, but nothing can fill the hole in your soul.

DISADVANTAGES: Compulsive Spending (12) [-5]; Gluttony (12) [-5]; Greed (12) [-15].

LACK OF DISCERNMENT

You display an astonishing lack of judgment. You believe everything you're told and pursue anything and anyone that piques your interest. Consequences, what's that?

DISADVANTAGES: Curious (12) [-5]; Gullibility (12) [-10]; Xenophilia (12) [-10].

POSSESSED SLAYER

Something takes over you in battle and you kill anyone in your path without regard for your own safety. Once it's over, you feel as if someone else did it and recoil at the smell of blood and guts covering you.

DISADVANTAGES: Berserk (12) [-10]; Bloodlust (12) [-10]; Post-Combat Shakes (12) [-5].

STARVED FOR ATTENTION

You can't ever get enough of people's attention, no matter how much you party or shower them in gifts. No matter how many outlandish lies you tell, nothing gets you the attention you need.

DISADVANTAGES: Compulsive Carousing (12) [-5]; Compulsive Generosity (12) [-5]; Compulsive Lying (12) [-15].

SUPERIORITY COMPLEX

You're better than everyone else. Why listen to others and do it their way when yours is best? Simple interactions with people bore you. You need the challenge of outwitting dangerous individuals to feel alive. They're still inferior to you, of course.

DISADVANTAGES: Overconfidence (12) [-5]; Stubbornness (12) [-5]; Trickster (12) [-15].

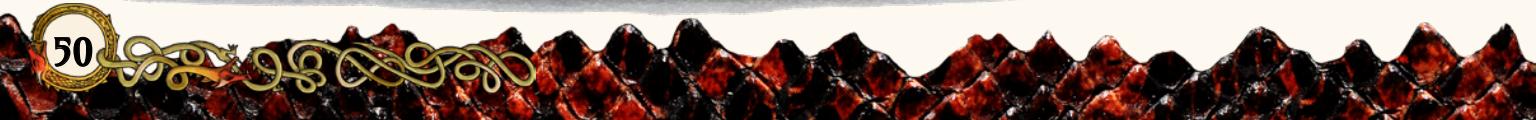
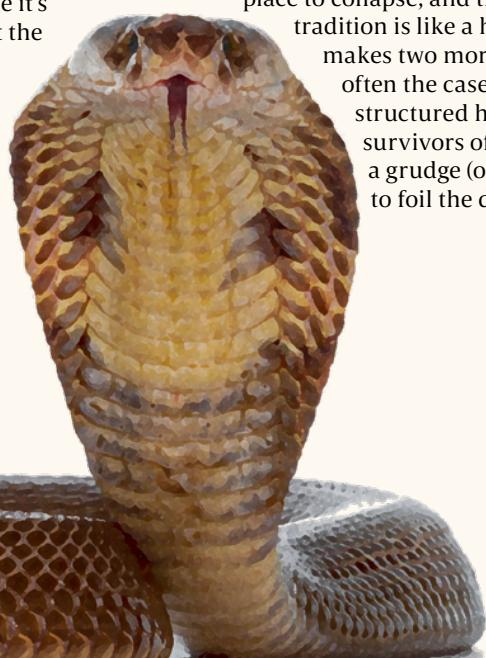
WILD ABANDON

You have no regard for personal safety and rush head-first into trouble. Planning and caution are for fools.

DISADVANTAGES: Berserk (12) [-10]; Impulsiveness (12) [-10]; Overconfidence (12) [-5].

BATTLING CULTS

All but the simplest, smallest cults are tricky adversaries. Delvers usually bump into them indirectly, facing a cover scheme the cult is running. Manipulating influential individuals, sponsoring criminal activities and inciting monsters are the most common. They may only realize they're facing a cult after piecing together a bunch of clues left by the proxies. Depending on the size of the cult, they may now have enough actionable intelligence to strike at it directly ... or they must investigate further, pursuing key players and front organizations until they lead them to the cult. Striking down the proxies weakens the cult, but does not dismantle it—the delvers must strike at the head to do so. This traditionally involves assaulting an evil lair and slaying the load-bearing high priest. This causes the whole place to collapse, and the cult with it. Another tradition is like a hydra-cutting off the head makes two more take its place. This is often the case for cults ran along well structured hierarchies. In any case, survivors of a defeated cult may carry a grudge (or a whole book) and return to foil the delvers another day.



BUILD YOUR OWN CULT

While a local chapter or small cult gathering makes for a reasonable node of evil, it is more interesting to build a cult that has a more convoluted structure. Follow these steps to design a layered cult which is more challenging to investigate. The delvers start at the bottom and must climb up the layers until they uncover enough information to strike at the cult's head.

NUMBER OF LAYERS

Decide on the number of layers the delvers must uncover before they can strike at the cult leadership, which is called the **core** layer.

Core Only. A fledgling cult without assets other than those of its founding members and a few recruits. They meet somewhere in the wilderness, in an abandoned barn, or in the home of one of the members. This is similar to an isolated dungeon or barrow with no outside relationships.

Core and Veneer. The true cult hides behind a layer of dupes, fresh recruits, or even employees who have no idea they're working for a cult. While this can still represent a fledgling cult, it can also mean an established one which is careful or doesn't seek to extend too much. Perhaps a local merchant, with a powerful core of expert leaders, who acts to exert hidden influence over usually disparate activities. The same core is involved directly with each veneer or shell group: Find any link, and delvers can track it back to the core. And kill them, because *that's always the story*.

Core and Shell(s). A savvy, powerful, and well-run cult. Many-layered organizations are hard to maintain, and even harder to keep secret. They are at least as powerful as a guild, and may have either overtaken one, or put tentacles into several. Expect both **shells** and **nodes**, where each node has little do to with other nodes in purpose or membership, and there are several shells so that the core is several steps removed from—and usually invisible to—individuals on the fringe.

Overt Guild or Church. Three or more layers tends to make for a whole campaign dedicated to battling the cult. More than that and the party will lose interest and never reach the leadership. The cult is likely so large and powerful that it is an established part of society: a guild, formal church, or fraternity (braeðralag, or brotherhood, in Nördlondur). If the core leadership is running the realm (perhaps secretly), it might effectively *be* the government. Make sure your players have signed up for the possibility of deep political intrigue in advance; this goes far beyond the usual hack-and-slash gameplay of the **DUNGEON FANTASY RPG**.

FRONT ORGANIZATIONS

Anything beyond a **Core Only** setup requires one or more entities that isn't overtly a serpent cult. Examples include criminal enterprises, businesses, guilds, mercenary

companies, knightly orders, or a sporting or gaming interest group. These front organizations are used to accumulate wealth and influence *publicly*.

The fronts may be benign or malignant. Benign fronts are manipulated by the cult without its members being aware they're working for one. A legitimate businesses or charitable entity may be secretly owned by a cult!

Cults use malignant fronts to exert force, sow chaos and spread corruption. Most at least have a cultist leader or even a full "inner circle" of serpent-worshipers, acting to set an example of tangible strength and raw chaos to attract those drawn to such.

POWER STRUCTURE

Distribute the organizations among nodes and shells, with the core of the cult at the center or top. Each layer should have at least the same number of elements as the one above it. The diagram should resemble a column or ziggurat—or the most pernicious of all, a corporate org chart ... which is exactly correct, of course.

The farther away a front is from the top, the less important it is to the cult and investigating it yields less information about the true cult. Malignant fronts should either be nodal (for deniability), or closely tied to the core through key disposable liaisons to maintain supervision.

At least one organization in each layer must connect to one of the layers above, with at least one path connecting the lowest layer with the top. Minimize the number of relationships that skip layers.

Each relationship should be tagged as **subordinate**, **cooperative**, or as a **rival**. Subordinate relationships cross layers, with the lower layer always taking orders from the upper one. Cooperative organizations actively work together toward a shared goal (often subordinate to the same entity). Cooperating organizations assist each other, pass orders from above without exerting control, and so on. Rival organizations often meet violently, or unwittingly aid delvers in foiling each other! Rivalries may be one-sided if one of the involved parties isn't yet aware the other is plotting against it. "An enemy of my enemy is my friend" is a very dangerous assumption for the delvers.

REFINEMENT

Once the relationship map is in place, you can refine the individual organizations. This includes persons of note, specific events, encounters, and so on. Provide pathways (clues, contacts, events) that allow delvers to traverse the cult's web of influence if they choose to follow them. If laying out information that boils down to "The Plot is This Way," be sure to have several vectors by which the key information reaches the delvers' hands (better yet, avoid overly constrained agency entirely, but that's another discussion).



THE CULT OF THOOM

You broke into my house, stole my property, murdered my servants, and my PETS! And that is what grieves me the most! You killed my snake! –Conan the Barbarian, 1982

An imposing dark-skinned man with long jet-black hair and mesmerizing contrabass voice, Dulsa Thoom wears only the finest of silks. A talented military commander in his youth, during his campaigns he found profound faith and love for his fellow man. He left his career to become a healer of body and soul, preaching the strength of a healthy mind in a healthy body. He gained followers, known for providing relief to the most troubled souls.

Today, he doesn't travel as much as he used to, spending his time at his mountainside retreat. Many diverse people make pilgrimages to spend time doing guided meditation, learning healthy living, and recuperating at a temple adorned with healing imagery from far-off Morevel. Like those intertwined snakes crawling up a staff.

This is all a charade. Thoom slew a couatl guarding a site corrupted by the World Nightmare. His supplicants are pawns: a source of income, societal influence and lovers. His entourage forms an outer circle unaware of what transpired in the temple's depths, retained only if they provide useful services or entertainment. If not, they are charmed, brought to the dark shrine in the temple's inner sanctum and sacrificed to fuel Thoom's power.

Some few with the right inclinations are invited to join the true cult. Those that refuse join the dupes in death.

Thoom seeks the wealth, influence and pleasure the forbidden power brings, indifferent to apocalyptic dreams and goals. He avoids further corruption through force of will, but must grow his power constantly to feed his accelerating proclivity for decadence: *Secret hedonism* is expensive in both connections and cash.

The rituals he performs in his shrine have given him great power, but he's very discreet with how he uses it. Potential adversaries are always first courted as allies before Thoom strikes them down: waste not, want not.

He cultivates relationships with neighboring settlements and is careful not to accept anyone too influential into his entourage, merely entertaining and milking them for donations.

The most likely reason for delvers to become entangled with him is getting hired to look for a missing relative.

CHILDREN OF EARTH

The Children of Earth are a troupe of healers spreading the word of Dulsa Thoom. They travel between towns in wagons, preach love for your fellow man, and offer their services at whatever price their patients can afford. Relatively few members have access to healing magic able to cure injury, disease, and poison. Most are practitioners of esoteric medicine and life coaches preaching Thoom's philosophy. They ask those who cannot afford the regular price for favors and assistance. Whatever they can provide: food, shelter, skilled services or temporary joining the troupe as helpers. A delver must win an **Acting** or **Panhandling** quick contest against the troupe's effective skill of 12 to pass as someone unable to afford the regular price. The troupe casts out those who get a reduced price but renege on their assistance.

The Children also sell "miraculous potions made of snake oil according to a secret recipe by Dulsa Thoom himself". They offer **Balms of Regeneration** and **Minor Healing Potions** at 80% the usual price. Subjecting the potions to a laboratory analysis with a successful **Alchemy** roll reveals they work as advertised except for a sedating side-effect. After imbibing any of the potions, the subject must make a **HT** roll at a penalty equal to **HP** restored. Their **Per** and **Will** are reduced by 4 for 4 hours on failure. On critical failure they additionally suffer from **hallucinations** for 24 hours. Success by 4 or more on the analysis roll reveals that some kind of magic ritual created the potions. This allows the alchemist to make a **Hidden Lore (Elder Things)** roll at -4, or no penalty if they are familiar with World Worm lore. Success lets them recognize the magic behind the potions as related to the World Worm. Success by 4 or more reveals the influence of nightmare corruption.

The Children of Earth are completely unaware of Thoom's true motives and corruption. They're just a band of hippies enthralled by his teachings. They will happily let the delvers come along as long as they behave and seem interested in the teachings. They will give directions to Thoom's mountainside retreat under the same assumptions.

The Children have somewhat of a vendetta against the Houses of Restoration. They detest them for their snobbishness and catering only to the rich. When in vicinity, they incite vandalism against them, disrupt their logistics and similar. They do this very discretely because if Thoom noticed, he would replace the Children's leadership or disband them outright. The Houses are so far unaware of this interference. They don't maintain any relationship with the Children.

Treat most of the Children as having combat stats of the *Cultist* (*NORÐLONDR BESTIARY, P. 52*). Disadvantages representative of the group include **Chummy**, **Compulsive Carousing**, **Cowardice**, **Gluttony**, **Lecherousness**, **Sense of Duty** (*Coreligionists*) and **Xenophilia**. They also have a few bad apples among their rank who hide their proclivities such as **Bully**, **Greed** or **Jealousy** well. The most competent among them are *Acolytes* (*P. 26*). When traveling, they often hire temporary guards—represent them with *Bandit/Pirate* (*P. 33*).

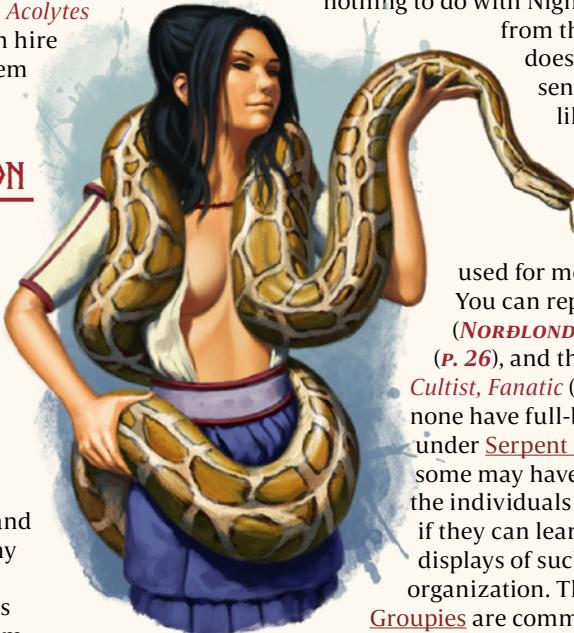
HOUSES OF RESTORATION

Thoom has established “Houses of Restoration” in several larger towns in the region. They operate like members-only social clubs, catering to the wealthy and influential. Monthly membership is \$300, and an active member must recommend a prospect for them to qualify. Houses offer wellness treatments, therapy, counseling and socialization in a relaxing, healthy environment. They also accept donations in exchange for various discrete services. These range from information brokering to purveyance of companionship and illicit substances. They do not offer magical services.

Dulsa Thoom visits these establishments to hold seminars and mingle with his most influential patrons. His personal retinue takes possession of the house on such occasions. Access is only allowed to members who donate no less than \$1000.

All staff members are Thoom’s followers. The senior ones (including those who purvey the “special” services) all have **Fanaticism**. They’re skilled servants, healers and businesspeople, and aren’t worth much in a fight (use the *Cultist* stats, *NORÐLONDR BESTIARY, P. 52*, in a pinch). For that, they have several guards with the stats of *Cultist*, *Fanatic* (*P. 53*), all with **Fanaticism**.

None of the staff are in on the true cult, but the senior ones are members of Thoom’s outer circle (see below). They know directions to Thoom’s temple but willingly give them only to members. They also offer to organize an escorted pilgrimage, for a generous donation of course. The delvers can also find evidence of the shady deals if they’re crafty. Revealing it won’t cause action against Thoom unless they go an extra mile, however, due to the connections he’s established.



THE OUTER CIRCLE

Members of the outer circle serve as staff at Thoom’s mountainside retreat. They’re fully immersed in his teachings and most have **Fanaticism**. Those who don’t are discretely conditioned to attain it. These cultists have nothing to do with Nightmare worship. They are barred from the inner sanctum and Thoom doesn’t use them for nefarious deeds. He sends some to work in front operations like Houses of Restoration, and entrusts those of the highest station with running them.

Members run a gamut from people with no special talent used for menial labor, to skillful experts. You can represent most with the *Cultist* stats (*NORÐLONDR BESTIARY, P. 52*), some with *Acolyte* (*P. 26*), and those more physically capable as *Cultist*, *Fanatic* (*P. 53*). At this stage of initiation, none have full-blown disadvantage modules listed under *Serpent Cultists* and *Tortured Souls*, but some may have bits and pieces. These are among the individuals eyed for promotion, but only if they can learn to control their vices. Public displays of such do not befit the image of Thoom’s organization. The full modules listed under *Cult Groupies* are common.

THE INNER CIRCLE

This is the true serpent cult. Thoom has chosen every single member for their usefulness; all have **Fanaticism** and would give their life for him. Only they have access to the mountainside compound’s inner sanctum.

Members consist of warriors, spellcasters and non-combat experts. You should represent only some of the latter as mere *Cultists* (*NORÐLONDR BESTIARY, P. 52*), though they inevitably have additional useful skills. Use *Cultist*, *Fanatic* (*P. 53*) for muscle, *Acolyte* (*P. 26*), *Berserker* (*P. 37*) and *Cultist*, *Possessed Warlock* (*P. 54*) for “specialists”, or the *Mage* (*P. 138*) and *Veteran* (*P. 184*) for lieutenants. There is a notable *martröðtýndr* minority who present as dragon-blooded to the outside. Use the *snákamaðr* hunter for most of them, including a couple veterans. There is also a handful of *assassins* and a single master assassin: Simetra Netreri, Thoom’s closest confidant and second in command. A number of *martröðtýndr* *serpent warriors* inhabit the forbidden depths of the temple as guards, never emerging to avoid being seen.

These Nightmare worshipers may have any of the disadvantage modules presented in the *Cult Personalities* section. Those with more egregious ones don’t get sent out much.

DULSA THOOM

Dulsa wears a set of magical jewelry at all times, even while sleeping. A **Ring of Warding**, a **Salamander Ring** and a **Serpentskin Amulet**; see below for their descriptions.

Each day he wears a different one of a dozen suits of silken cloth armor. Each is **ornate** (+3 to reactions), enchanted with **Fortify 1** and worth \$2,500. On his belt he has a **balanced, very fine, ornate** (+3 to reactions) **orichalcum long knife** worth \$7,440. One of his bodyguards carries his **balanced fine elven ornate** (+2 to reactions) **longbow** worth \$5,600 and a **large hip quiver** with **50 fine bodkin-point arrows**. Both the knife and bow bear decorations depicting snakes. He uses the knife as his sacrificial blade and it is a **25-point power item**.

TACTICS

Daily Magic. Every morning, Dulsa casts **Hide Thoughts**, **Missile Shield**, **Resist Pain** and **Scryguard**. He may maintain up to four spells for free, and maintains these at all times unless battle tactics dictate otherwise. He casts **Hide Emotions** when he expects valuable social interaction.

Battlemage. Thoom casts **Daze** on strategic targets and **Total Paralysis** on foes who get close if he thinks he can land a hit on them. He casts support spells as needed—**Spell Shield** only if he can afford to stay in one place. He cancels **Hide Thoughts** and **Scryguard** if his effective casting roll gets reduced below 16 due to maintaining *more than* four spells. This is in part for his resisted spells to remain effective, but also to maximize the success chance of **Iron Arm**.

Mystic Marksman. When not casting spells, Dulsa attacks with his bow. He uses **Viper Arrow** for close-range work and **Seeker Snake** when he has extra time. He especially loves to snipe fleeing opponents with it. He only uses his knife as a backup weapon, if deprived of his bow or out of arrows.

VIP. Thoom leaves his minions to fight in all but the most dire situations while he withdraws with his bodyguards. If pressed to battle, he retrieves his bow and quiver from a bodyguard and acts from behind his minions.

Snake-monster! Dulsa only transforms into his monstrous form if he's losing a battle and retreat or surrender aren't viable. He would rather get captured and orchestrate an escape than reveal his true nature to the world. He can still cast spells and use weapons in this form but the knife is mostly just useful as a power item at this point. He grapples with his tail, and uses his venomous bite and shoots the bow at the grappled victim. Or just drops 3 arrows downrange per second.

DULSA THOOM'S MAGIC ITEMS

- ❖ *The Salamander Ring* is in all regards identical to the *Salamander Amulet* as described on **ADVENTURERS, P. 118**.
- ❖ *The Ring of Warding* gives the wearer +1 DB. This is not cumulative with an armor or shield enchanted with a **Deflect** spell. It is worth \$6000. To those who sell their souls to Nightmare, the DB stacks with other **Deflect** enchantments. The ring is worth \$12,000 to such creatures.
- ❖ *The Serpentskin Amulet* gives the wearer +1 DR and +1 Control DR, stackable with other sources. This increases to +3 if the wearer is a willful Nightmare supplicant. It is worth \$43,000 to such people, or \$4,500 otherwise.

SEEKER SNAKE

Regular

You whisper "Seek!" to a snake and straighten it out into the shape of an arrow while casting this spell. You must then **Ready** it in your bow normally. To shoot it, take a separate **Ready** maneuver: The *snake* makes its own attack roll using your spell's skill level as its hit roll. You may target hit locations normally. You may **Aim** before firing. Make a weapon skill roll—add weapon Acc to the snake's skill if you succeed. Note that you must have a snake in hand before casting the spell, which takes a **Ready** maneuver if you have it on your person or grab one conveniently nearby.

The snake ignores all range penalties, as well as any penalties which would apply to the attack if you were doing it. Against warm-blooded targets it also ignores visibility penalties. It does **impaling (2)** damage equal to whatever damage you would do if you were making the attack with the equipped bow, plus a venomous follow-up based on energy invested in the spell. It does full damage out to max range, but hits on the turn after shooting it if attacking beyond 1/2D range.

Cost: 2 per **1d+1 toxic damage**, up to 3d+3.

Time to cast: 1 second.

VIPER ARROW

Regular

The spell is cast on a missile readied in a bow or crossbow. You can then attack with it normally. The missile does its regular damage, plus a **toxic** follow-up based on energy invested in the spell. If it penetrates **DR**, it turns into a viper stuck in the victim. Starting on your next turn, it automatically deals half of its **toxic damage** once per turn until removed.

To remove the snake, a medic (or the victim) must first partially remove any armor or clothing at the affected hit location. This halves **DR** until donned again and requires a Ready maneuver and a successful **DX** roll. The exposed viper must then be grabbed with a successful grappling attack. It is SM -3 and has a **Dodge** score of 9. Removing it after grabbing requires a **Ready** maneuver. The viper does half the non-toxic injury it did when striking unless the medic succeeds at a **First Aid** roll, or a **Surgery** roll at +3. Once removed, the viper gets a free attack against the medic—treat it as an ordinary *viper* (**NORDLOND BESTIARY, p. 185**) from this point onward, except its viper venom **toxic damage** is whatever it did as part of the spell.

Cost: 2 per **1d+1 toxic damage**, up to 3d+3.

Time to cast: 1 second.



DULSA THOOM

MUNDANE

Bartered Soul. Dulsa Thoom is past the point of no return in trading his soul to Nightmare for power. He is lost beyond the redemptive powers of those bound within *Yggdrasil*. Several of his magic items are supercharged as a result of that bargain; if delvers get their hands on them, they don't work as well.

Master Archer. Dulsa has both Heroic Archer and Weapon Master (Bows). This means he can shoot every turn by making a Fast-Draw (Arrow) roll and a Bow -1 roll to ready the bow. The attack roll to shoot it is also at -1. He adds Accuracy to the latter unless he performs a Move and Attack or shoots from close combat. Don't forget to use Seeker Snake and Viper Arrow!

Snakeshifter. By taking a Ready maneuver, Dulsa can change shape into that of a bipedal snake-monster. He can turn himself into a full-on snake, but poring over ancient tomes such as Vondurstjóribók has convinced him that it never helps. He grows to two and a half yards tall and becomes leaner and more elongated. His skin transforms to scales, his head into that of a hooded snake. He grows claws, fangs and a long, flexible tail. This destroys any clothing or the straps on armor he wears, but his jewelry and belt (including the attached knife) remain intact. The two forms have separate HP pools! All of Dulsa Thoom's skills and spells are shared between his human and snake-monster form.

SKILLS

- Acting-16
- Animal Handling (Snakes)-15
- Bow-18
- Brawling-18
- Broadsword-16
- Connoisseur (Luxuries)-15
- Detect Lies-14
- Diagnosis-14
- Diplomacy-16
- Esoteric Medicine-14
- Exorcism-14
- Fast-Draw (Arrow)-15
- Fast-Draw (Knife)-15
- Fast-Draw (Sword)-15
- First Aid-14
- Hazardous Materials-15
- Hidden Lore (Elder Things)-15
- Intimidation-15
- Knife-16
- Leadership-17
- Meditation-14
- Merchant-15
- Naturalist-14
- Observation-15
- Occultism-15
- Pharmacy-14
- Poisons-14
- Propaganda-15
- Public Speaking-19
- Religious Ritual-14
- Research-15
- Riding (Horse)-13
- Savoir-Faire-16
- Stealth-13
- Strategy-14
- Surgery-14
- Tactics-14
- Teaching-15
- Thaumatology-13
- Theology-14
- Wrestling-18

ST 13 DX 14 IQ 16 HT 13

HP 13 WILL 16 PER 16 FP 13

Control Thresholds

≥0.1×CM	≥1/2×CM	≥CM	≥1.5×CM	≥2×CM	D _{MG}	1d/2d-1
2	8	15	23	30	BASIC LIFT 34	

Defenses			SPEED 7.00
Parry	Dodge	Block	DR
13	12	—	5
MOVE			7

ATTACKS

- Grapple (18): 1d+3 control. Reach C.
- Long Knife (17): 2d cutting or 1d+2 impaling. Reach C, 1.
- Longbow (19): 1d+7 (2) piercing. Acc 4, Range 195/260, RoF 1, Shots 1 (2).
- Punch (18): 1d crushing. Reach C.

TRAITS

- Charisma 2
- Clerical Investment
- Combat Reflexes
- Compulsive Generosity (12)
- Danger Sense
- Disciplines of Faith (Chi Rituals)
- Energy Reserve 15
- Greed (12)
- Heroic Archer
- Jealousy
- Lecherousness (12)
- Night Vision 9
- Peripheral Vision
- Power Investiture 6
- Resistant to Poison 5
- Strongbow
- Unfazeable
- Voice
- Wealth (Very Wealthy)

DULSA THOOM, SNAKE MONSTER

MUNDANE (TAILED HUMANOID)

All of Dulsa Thoom's skills and spells carry over into his snake-monster form. The snake form also inflicts a malady on those it strikes.

THOOM'S DOOM

If a bite or claw attack penetrates DR, the victim must make a HT-3 roll or suffer the effects of a **depowering curse**. Both **Magic Resistance** and **Higher Purpose (Elder Things)** add to HT rolls to resist the curse's effects. Failing the HT roll results in three effects, cumulative with additional strikes.

- ⌚ Lose 1 level of **Bardic Talent**, **Chi Talent**, **Magery**, or **Power Investiture**
- ⌚ A penalty of -1 to all attribute-based die rolls
- ⌚ Damage rolls are reduced by -2 or -1 *per die*, whichever is worse

The curse is limited to three levels. Suffering a fourth causes a **heart attack**.

While afflicted, the victim must make a daily **HT** roll (penalized by the curse's level). Success restores one level of spellcasting talent and reduces the curse level by 1; failure increases it. The only way to get rid of the curse for good is via **Remove Curse**; the curse resists with skill 20.

TRAITS

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| ⌚ Bloodlust (12) | ⌚ Heroic Archer |
| ⌚ Clerical Investment | ⌚ Immune to Poison |
| ⌚ Cold-Blooded | ⌚ Infravision |
| ⌚ Combat Reflexes | ⌚ Jealousy |
| ⌚ Constriction Attack | ⌚ Lecherousness (12) |
| ⌚ Danger Sense | ⌚ Nictitating Membrane 2 |
| ⌚ Disciplines of Faith (Chi Rituals) | ⌚ Night Vision 9 |
| ⌚ Energy Reserve 15 | ⌚ Peripheral Vision |
| ⌚ Extra Attack 2 | ⌚ Power Investiture 6 |
| ⌚ Flexibility | ⌚ Strongbow |
| ⌚ Greed (12) | ⌚ Unfazeable |
| | ⌚ Wealth (Very Wealthy) |

SPELLS

- | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| ⌚ Analyze Magic-20 | ⌚ Daze-20 | ⌚ Mind-Search-19 | ⌚ Spell Shield-20 | ⌚ Minor Healing-20 |
| ⌚ Astral Vision-19 | ⌚ Dispel Magic-20 | ⌚ Missile Shield-20 | ⌚ Test Food-20 | ⌚ Regeneration-19 |
| ⌚ Aura-20 | ⌚ Dispel | ⌚ Pentagram-20 | ⌚ Total Paralysis-20 | ⌚ Restoration-19 |
| ⌚ Beast Speech-20 | ⌚ Possession-20 | ⌚ Recover Energy-20 | ⌚ Viper Arrow-20 | ⌚ Restore Hearing-20 |
| ⌚ Beast Summoning-20 | ⌚ Gift of Letters-20 | ⌚ Remove Curse-20 | ⌚ Watchdog-20 | ⌚ Restore Memory-20 |
| ⌚ Beast-Soother-20 | ⌚ Gift of Tongues-20 | ⌚ Resist Pain-20 | ⌚ Wizard Eye-20 | ⌚ Restore Sight-20 |
| ⌚ Bless-20 | ⌚ Great Voice-20 | ⌚ Scryguard-20 | ⌚ Awaken-20 | ⌚ Restore Speech-20 |
| ⌚ Bravery-20 | ⌚ Hide Emotion-20 | ⌚ See Invisible-20 | ⌚ Cleansing-20 | ⌚ Stop Bleeding-20 |
| ⌚ Charm-20 | ⌚ Hide Thoughts-20 | ⌚ See Secrets-20 | ⌚ Cure Disease-20 | ⌚ Stop Paralysis-20 |
| ⌚ Command-20 | ⌚ Iron Arm-20 | ⌚ Seeker-20 | ⌚ Great Healing-19 | ⌚ Stop Spasm-20 |
| ⌚ Compel Truth-20 | ⌚ Loyalty-20 | ⌚ Seeker Snake-20 | ⌚ Instant Neutralize | ⌚ Suspended |
| ⌚ Dark Vision-20 | ⌚ Mage Sight-20 | ⌚ Sleep-20 | ⌚ Poison-19 | ⌚ Animation-20 |
| | ⌚ Mind-Reading-20 | ⌚ Soul Rider-20 | ⌚ Major Healing-19 | |

ST 20

DX 14

K 16

HT 13

HP 20

WILL 16

PER 16

FP 13

Control Thresholds

$\geq 0.1 \times CM$	$\geq 1/2 \times CM$	$\geq CM$	$\geq 1.5 \times CM$	$\geq 2 \times CM$	SM +1
----------------------	----------------------	-----------	----------------------	--------------------	-------

2 11 22 33 44 DMG 2d-1/3d+2

BASIC LIFT 80

Defenses				SPEED 8.00
Parry	Dodge	Block	DR	

14 13 — 7 MOVE 8

ATTACKS

- ⌚ **Bite (18):** 2d+3 cutting plus 2d toxic and **Thoom's Doom** follow-up. Reach C, 1. Treat as a weapon, not as body part.
- ⌚ **Claw (18):** 2d+3 cutting plus 2d toxic and **Thoom's Doom** follow-up. Reach C, 1. Treat as a weapon, not as body part.
- ⌚ **Grapple (18):** 2d+4 control. Reach C, 1.
- ⌚ **Longbow (19):** 2d+8 (2) piercing. Acc 4, Range 300/400, RoF 1, Shots 1 (2).

THE SILVER TORC TRADE GUILD

The cult of Thoom represents a sprawling threat, already powerful and widespread. Not all cults are that large. Some are small enough for a band of adventurers to cut them right down to size.

The Silver Torc Trade Guild is an association of merchants and tradespeople who frequent the small town of Ulfakjöt. It emerged several years ago, when Brethel Ormudsdottir and Yngvi Rannison pooled their resources to save their faltering businesses. It worked. Yngvi is now the most successful miller in the jarldom, and Brethel expanded into multiple establishments beyond her trading post. Today, the Silver Torc has about a dozen members. They share knowledge and connections, and support each other with services each respective member can provide.

HISTORY

When their businesses were on the brink of collapse several years ago, Brethel, Yngvi, and Olaf the Innkeeper sought guidance from a wandering fortune teller, who directed them to a cave in the nearby forest. There they found a multi-headed snake statue inside the cave. Strange voices offered them prosperity in exchange for service. Brethel and Yngvi returned to Ulfakjöt; Olaf did not. Their fortunes improved rapidly. Well, *Olaf's* didn't.

MEMBERSHIP

Brethel and Yngvi lead the cult together. The other dozen members are tradespeople recruited for their usefulness. None of the cultists have any deep understanding of Nightmare. They "just" worship a statue in a cave, and sacrifice some poor sap in a bloody ritual once a month. In return, they receive good fortune—despite weird dreams they have yet to make sense of.

The cultists are commoners, not warriors—represent them using *Cultists (NORDLOND BESTIARY, P. 52)*, while Brethel and Yngvi use the *Fanatic Cultist (NORDLOND BESTIARY, P. 52)* due to their wealth.

THE CAVE

The cave is an hour's walk from town, in the nearby forest. The entrance is in the face of a small hill, covered in thick vegetation. A winding passage slopes downward until it opens up into a cavern. Large patches of narcotic mushrooms dot the floor, and sparse light makes it through cracks in the roof. At the cavern mouth stands a cage set up to hold sacrificial



victims. At the back, there is a man-sized statue of a multi-headed snake, which seems to undulate if stared at too long. Behind it, another passage leads to a [snakebear](#) den. It ignores the cultists, but sometimes helps itself to the sacrificed victim's remains. Another passage, just wide enough for the snakebear, connects the den to the outside.

TRAIL OF BODIES

The cult sources sacrificial victims from travelers passing through town. Their primary "hunting ground" is Brethel's inn. She places victims into rooms accessible by underground trapdoors, laces their food with the soporific mushrooms, and abducts them during the night. The cultists smuggle the captive to Yngvi's mill outside of town, and off to the cave from there. Initially, Brethel and Yngvi disposed of the bodies in the forest. When a concerned trading partner made a fuss over a missing peddler, they started leaving the corpses along the road or other places, disguised as if mauled by animals or killed by bandits. This deflected the search, but the town now has a reputation as being plagued by monsters and bandits.

ARTIFACT TRADE

Brethel wishes to know more about the forces she serves. She started discreetly trading in artifacts and books related to snakes. Lacking any knowledge in obscure lore, she didn't really know where to start, and she didn't consult anyone else to avoid drawing suspicion. She has a small collection of snake-themed artifacts, and eclectic books on magical practices, primarily related to dreams. She hasn't yet bumped into anything about snákamaðr, much less martröðtýndr or Nightmare.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The easiest way to get delvers on the trail of the Silver Torc is to have them investigate a fresh disappearance, or the rumors of deaths around Ulfakjöt. If they stay in Brethel's inn, they could hear strange noises during the night. Rumors about leading to the snakebear would eventually find the traces of the cult in the cave. "Ulfakjöt" could be nearly any small village with a convenient wooded area.

NIGHTMARE CORRUPTION

Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. —Genesis 3:4–6

NIGHTMARE LOVE LANGUAGES

Nightmare acts to bring the fears of the slumbering world worm into being, using a decidedly unhealthy relationship dynamic.

NIGHTMARE: ACTS OF SERVICE

The corrupting touch of World Nightmare starts subtly, coaxing an individual to perform seemingly innocuous acts through voices and visions, conditioning the subject to listen to its subtle advice.

The acts become more involved, harmful, and dangerous, eventually transforming into vile rituals. Resistance is met with an affliction of harrowing nightmares until they comply, fueling the World Nightmare and Jörmungandr's demise.

POWER-SEEKERS: GIFTS

In return for acts of service, Nightmare grants *power*. Its gifts may seem random, or have some biting tie-in to the supplicant's foibles and character flaws. On the other hand, those with actual knowledge of Nightmare may choose their gifts, carefully performing rituals maximizing gifted power and minimizing services required. They lead almost-normal lives, though the ritual burden is higher, frequently requiring human sacrifice. It is *impossible* to exploit corruption and lead a “good” life.

Nightmare gifts manifest in two ways: physical mutation and arcane power. Represent the former with modifications selected from [Traits](#). The latter can be spells, special powers found on monsters or similar to **Druidic Arts** or **Holy Might** albeit evil, snake-themed, and not tied to any of the usual PC-facing power sources (Magery, Power Investiture, etc.): Give the NPC some spells at level 15 or 20 along with enough **Fatigue Points** or **Energy Reserve** to use them. Disregard prerequisites; these abilities are gifts instead of learned magic. For existing spellcasters, corruption grants access to spells otherwise barred to their profession, again ignoring prerequisites. This may be any spell the GM considers thematically appropriate, but spells from the **Air, Fire, Making and Breaking, Movement, Water and Weather** colleges generally aren't. Nightmare *never* grants spells that create light. Secret GM-created spells are excellent for this purpose!

DELVING INTO CORRUPTION

Nightmare corruption is not intended for player characters. It does not befit charismatic anti-heroes or tragic martyrs. Once a person attains any notable gifts, a monster is already created wearing the individual's face.

Flirting with evil is a time-honored tradition in roleplaying games—GMs who think such elements are appropriate for their group can give their players a taste of corruption using the following guidelines.

THE RULES

The first rule of corruption club is that there are no player-facing rules. There is nothing for them to plan, game or optimize—everything is at the discretion of the GM.

Delver Opt-Out. When a delver comes in contact with Corruption, they may automatically resist its temptations if the player has no desire to dabble in it. This can happen at places where it seeps into *Midgard*, or through contact with corrupted items.

Press Evil Key to Continue. If they embrace it, first assess consequences as explained below. Then, after a while, give them the option to delve deeper, maintain the current status quo, or renounce it. Repeat the cycle as needed. Once the player has agreed to take on corruption, work with them to pick the most appropriate gift, but do not reveal anything about the drawbacks until they manifest! Dabbling in corruption is dangerous and unpredictable. Delving too deep causes the character to become an NPC!

Play Stupid Games... Every time the delver attains corruption, they may gain an ability from [Traits](#) or a new spell. This may be any spell in the game as long as it follows the thematic guidelines given for NPC spellcasters under [Nightmare Love Languages](#). Their level in the spell is equal to IQ plus the level of any **Bardic Talent**, **Chi Mastery**, **Holiness**, **Magery** or **Power Investiture** they may have. Corruption is sneaky and can piggyback off of any existing channel to power. Instead of gaining a new spell, the delver may increase their level in one spell already attained like this by 5. They may not improve these spells otherwise.

... WIN STUPID PRIZES

When initially corrupted, a delver gains Alien Visions, Harrowing Nightmares, and a corruption module containing several disadvantages. The GM may choose this from one of the Tortured Souls modules (poetic justice is encouraged!) or roll 1d twice on the table below. Do not add them together, read each die separately. If a delver gets a corruption module containing a disadvantage they already have, worsen its control number by one step.

d6	d6	RESULT
1	1–3	<i>Abuser</i> : Bad Temper, Bully, Stubbornness
1	4–6	<i>Bereft of Inhibition</i> : Lecherousness, Xenophilia
2	1–3	<i>Bird-Brained</i> : Curious, Phobia (Loud Noises), Short Attention Span
2	4–6	<i>Destroyer</i> : Bad Temper, Bloodlust, Pyromania
3	1–3	<i>Endbringer</i> : Bloodlust, Loner, Obsession (End the world)
3	4–6	<i>Ignorant of Value</i> : Compulsive Generosity, Compulsive Spending, Kleptomania
4	1–3	<i>Insatiable</i> : Compulsive Spending, Gluttony, Greed
4	4–6	<i>Lack of Discernment</i> : Curious, Gullibility, Xenophilia
5	1–3	<i>Possessed Slayer</i> : Berserk, Bloodlust, Post-Combat Shakes
5	4–6	<i>Starved for Attention</i> : Compulsive Carousing, Compulsive Generosity, Compulsive Lying
6	1–3	<i>Superiority Complex</i> : Overconfidence, Stubbornness, Trickster
6	4–6	<i>Wild Abandon</i> : Berserk, Impulsiveness, Overconfidence

The Abyss Looks Into You. Corruption module disadvantages start with a control number of 15 when initially attained unless the delver already had them (see above). They worsen by one step (12, 9, 6, –) each time the delver is further corrupted. Once they go below 6, the delver suffers the disadvantage effect *all the time*. Should an always-on disadvantage render a character unplayable, or if the subject is so corrupted an always-on trait becomes even worse, they turn into an NPC under the GM's control. This monster in human(oid)'s clothing then seeks to sacrifice their erstwhile companions to Nightmare, murders or corrupts entire villages, and the like. Welcome to the Bad Guy Club; you probably have a bad ending in your future.

Renouncing corruption. Shedding the influence of Nightmare allows only one pathway to redemption: Follow the same process as recovering the use of **Holy Abilities** for a cleric or holy warrior. Doing so removes all benefits and drawbacks granted by corruption. As a farewell gift, the delver suffers from nightmares with the usual consequences for a month after their cleansing. They may never attain corruption again.

ALIEN VISIONS [-5 POINTS]

You suffer from alien visions at inopportune moments. They nudge you to perform random, but not necessarily harmful or otherwise bad acts. Roll 3d in any stressful situation, whenever you fail a **Fright Check** or make it exactly, or whenever you fail a **self-control roll** for a disadvantage. On 6 or less, you suffer –2 on all **skill** and **Perception rolls** as the visions interfere with whatever you're doing. This lasts for the duration of the scene (GM's judgment).

As you attain more corruption the acts in your visions turn ever more harmful and depraved.

HARROWING NIGHTMARES [-5 POINTS]

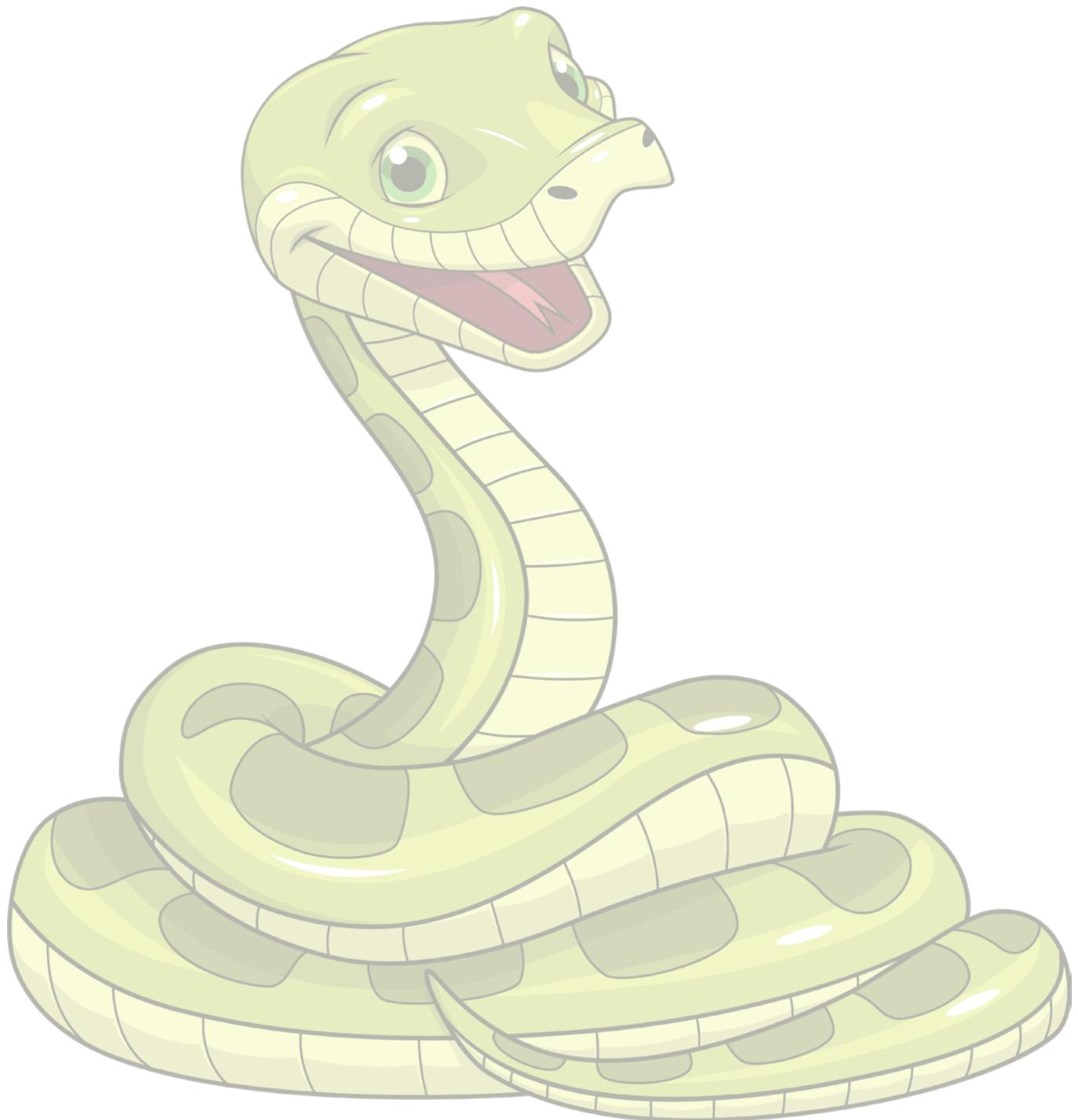
On any day you attempt a **self-control roll** for any disadvantage in your corruption module, you suffer through harrowing nightmares during the following night. You awaken with **1 FP** lost you can only recover through sleep, and must make a **fright check**. On failure, in addition to its usual effects, you take a –1 penalty to all **skill** and **Perception rolls** the entire day.

KEEPING IT CLEAN

The corruption and trait rules present a sterile, even light-hearted pastiche of the “power corrupts” trope. It **glosses over** details and moral implications.

Some disadvantages compel characters to heinous deeds, and “Hey, I’m just playing my character” is never an excuse to make the table an un-fun place. If anyone in your group—including the GM!—is uncomfortable with this, do not use these rules! Remove the character from play: no saving throw.

Even on a beer-and-pretzels level, the downward-spiraling control numbers restrict or remove player agency. Many rightfully dislike this, and it can disrupt the game. Communication is key: Talk early and often. Do not assign corruption modules with which you or any of your players have problems. If you want to minimize potential strife, do not award more corruption than would reduce control numbers to less than 12, removing the fallen from play sooner rather than later.





THIS IS WHY IT HAD TO BE SNAKES

Serpents of Legend contains

- ❖ Dangerous mundane snakes, hydras, gorgons, coatl, and more
- ❖ Traits, tactics, and deadly toxins for serpents
- ❖ Snake cults, their leaders, and Delvers to Grow modules for cultists
- ❖ Lore detailing Jormundandr and Nightmare Corruption

Why did it have to be snakes? How could it be anything else!

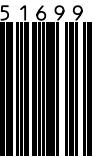
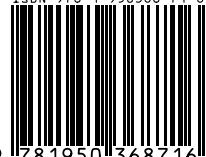


DUNGEON FANTASY

POWERED BY GURPS



ISBN 978-1-950368-71-6



9 781950 368716

